

THE  
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INTRODUCTION.

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IN presenting to our readers the first Number of this Periodical Work, the Publishers consider it a duty to offer to its generous Patrons in particular, and to all in general who may be disposed to give it a candid perusal, a concise account of the origin, and contemplated objects of such a publication.

A few months since, a few of the Brethren in the belief and Ministry of the Gospel of reconciliation, who are members of the "General Convention of the four New-England States and others," conceived, that in addition to the Annual Meeting of that body, some improvement might be gained by more frequent interviews, although the number should be but small. They accordingly met in Conference at Gloucester, Cape-Ann, in the month of January last. At that meeting, it was agreed, that a Conference of the Brethren in the Ministry, be holden Quarterly, at such places as may appear most proper and convenient. A standing Moderator and Clerk were chosen, either or both of whose places, in case of absence, is to be supplied by others, elected pro tem. The business of this conference, originally embraced conversation upon Moral and Religious subjects. In addition to this, the spirit of free enquiry suggested a plan, some useful effects of which, we hope may be realized. The various brethren of the conference have the liberty of proposing questions upon any moral or divine subject. These questions are committed to other members, to be by them, answered in writing. These productions are to be read at the succeeding meeting; and if they meet the approbation of the brethren assembled, are lodged with the Clerk.

These are the outlines of a plan, which has since been enlarged and improved. It has been concluded to publish by



subscription in Quarterly Numbers, the several questions proposed, as before mentioned, with the answers which are given ; but this will not be done to the exclusion of other important matter in different forms. And though what is contained in the "GOSPEL VISITANT," will be chiefly original, yet we shall occasionally insert extracts from those writers who have labored for the instruction and improvement of man. Where the milder virtues of Christianity Candor, Charity and Benevolence distinguish the page of an author, we may safely quote his observations, and without hesitation follow where reason leads ; nor need we forbid our readers this gratification, because as to the circumstance of name or sect, such a writer "followeth not with us."

The objects contemplated, though not vast in number, are still, as is conceived, of the highest importance. The diffusion of light, the promotion of knowledge, the public recommendation and progress of virtue, piety and religion, are, acknowledgedly, matters of the first consideration. We may indeed be asked, "and who is sufficient for these things ?" We may hear our own incompetency suggested, in terms, which even vanity itself would not choose to deny ; but it is still true, that discussion is favorable to the objects which reason contemplates. Truth is the result of comparison ; and if there ever was a time when a comparison of systems and theories, all claiming to be measured by one standard, were necessary, the present is, unquestionably, such a period.

To us it appears evident, that nothing but the truth can reconcile the present divisions, which unhappily prevail in the Christian world ; and that a candid and fair investigation of received opinions, must gradually tend to the attainment of that object. It need not be urged, *that it is impossible that this brief Periodical publication should embrace any new truth.* The same observation will apply with equal propriety to the *Panoplist*, the *Christian Observer*, and the multitude of Magazines, devoted to the diffusion of moral and religious knowledge. These works abound in the present day. And though we shall not take upon us, to discuss their relative merits, nor argue their general utility nor inutility ; still there is one observation, which reason prompts us to make ; viz. we possess the privilege, in common with our fellow christians, of presenting to a candid public, our views of things, relating to the kingdom of God ; and in the exercise of this privilege, we contemplate some good effect. If the system we profess, be founded upon reason and revelation ; if it embraces the good and happiness of man, then let its principles be disseminated.



But if, upon trial and comparison, it appears that no such advantages attach to the doctrine for which we contend, then let it be exposed in its own deformity; the world can lose nothing by its exposure.

In making these reflections, we must not be understood to carry the idea, that this Pamphlet is to form a complete system of the doctrine in which we believe; but we trust it will possess some advantages above a large treatise. In works of a periodical nature, a kind of familiarity in style is generally adopted, which is always beneficial. And where the reader has had an opportunity to consult larger volumes upon a system, the parts of which are afterwards exhibited in a separate view, and in detached and concise portions, it will greatly assist him in establishing in his own mind, the several relations of those parts to each other, and in a more minute classification of his ideas.

Whatever, in our apprehension, has a tendency to virtue, piety, and pure and undefiled religion, in a word, whatever may have an effect, to exhibit divine truth, as altogether lovely, shall from time to time, as we have needed assistance granted us, be faithfully represented in these pages. The body of the work will be devoted to essays and arguments, on those subjects, which we believe are of primary importance in the various walks of the christian life. A department will be allotted to poetry. We shall perhaps be sparing of anecdote, though occasionally it may gain a place. Ordinations, installations, and general accounts of public conventional proceedings, will occupy a part; and in addition, such obituary notice, as is usual, in similar publications. In this form, we submit our labors to the consideration of the candid, liberal and enlightened.



## ANSWER TO THE QUESTION—WHAT PROFESSION OF FAITH, &c.

**QUESTION.**—What Profession of Faith, do the Scriptures teach us was set forth and required by Christ and his Apostles, the belief of which, constituted a believer in the faith of the Apostolic Churches?

In the discussion of the subjects embraced in this query, we shall study simplicity, and aim at instruction and improvement. It is necessary to premise that the views which have been taken of this question are as different as those upon any theological point. And the various contradictory theories which have



been raised, have rather contributed to the exercise of the spirit of hatred and wrath than to soften, curb and subdue the malevolent passions. Each mad sectarian, with apparently equal pretensions to truth, with his opponent, has cried out in the name of his blinded disciples, "the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are we." This language, abstracted from concomitant circumstances might be harmless; but unhappily a dire train of bitter consequences, are the result of such causes. Passion has been enlisted in the contest. Persecution has waved her red standard and rallied around her banner, frantic zeal, spiritual pride and uncharitableness. Strengthened by such potent allies, her warfare against the religion and disciples of Jesus, has been more successful than just. The Christian world has been divided into parties, each claiming a kind of infallibility, not so much from the author of the Christian religion, as under the name of the leader of the particular sect. By such means, man has been made the enemy of man. The simplest truth has been industriously clouded and concealed; and many who were ardently desirous to acknowledge and profess that "worthy name by which they are called" have been shut out from the common privileges of christians, because they could not conscientiously subscribe to such articles, as, being the traditions of men, make no part in the requirements of the Christian dispensation.

Though we cannot promise ourselves the full attainment of an object, at once so high, so important and so extensive, as the deliverance of the mind from the power of false and incongruous systems; yet we believe something may be done, which may not be altogether ineffectual. Comparison of opposite things is favorable to the discovery of truth. Our readers are assured that we aim at such an advantage. Our efforts may be feeble, but we are conscious that the exertions made, are honestly directed; and we rest in confidence upon the noble simplicity of the Gospel, and the active, enlightened reason of man, for the fruits and consequences of our labours.

In discussing the question proposed, we shall adopt the following method,

I. Set forth the Christian profession of faith, in one simple proposition, differently expressed in the New Testament.

II. Consider the evidences, on which this profession of faith will rest.

III. Exhibit the propriety and necessity of simplicity and unity, in the profession of the Christian faith.

1. The simple proposition, the belief of which constituted a believer, in the faith of the Apostolic Churches, is thus expres-



sed: Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God—John xx, 31. This proposition is stated differently in the New Testament, though it is conceived that the idea is the same. Simplicity, that characterizes the whole Gospel, shines conspicuously here; and this circumstance, added to the important truth it embraces, renders it worthy of a careful investigation.

We shall be excused for considering this point both negatively and positively. It appears strange at first sight, if modern systems be correct, that the articles established as objects of faith, had not been made more numerous and more complex; inasmuch as number and complexity have distinguished all modern theories.

It seems equally astonishing, if received opinions of men be well founded, that our Saviour and his Apostles never required of new converts at their connexion with the Christian church, an expression of their belief in the article of endless misery. It is the more surprizing, as the pretended followers of the Lamb make this an important point, to which their newly initiated brethren are bound to subscribe; and the rejection of which will prevent their admission into the church, or prove the cause of their excommunication, if already members. We can receive no light upon this subject only by a recurrence to the nature of the Christian dispensation. The Gospel was never designed as a system of abstruse, complex, mysterious theories. It was from these, in part, that evangelical truth was calculated to deliver the world. The Gospel is in fact a highway and a way, in which the way-faring men, though fools, shall not err. Again, we can conceive nothing more improper, than the requirement of a faith in condemnation, as synonymous with faith in Christ, when a primary assertion concerning Christ, is, that God sent not his Son into the world, to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved.

The necessity of an acknowledgement, that Jesus was the Christ the Son of God, will appear from the following consideration, viz.—It was the great article which the Jewish Rabbis and all their adherents doubted; and it is easy to see, that if convinced of the truth of the above proposition, the mind was prepared to receive a knowledge of all truths, which grow out of it.

We are induced to regard this as a preparatory step, particularly with regard to the Jews; as that people had been taught by Moses and the Prophets to expect a Messiah; and when he appeared they rejected him, from the supposition that he was an impostor, and rejecting him, they despised also his



works and doctrine. This would never have been, had they known who he was, in the sense asserted in the scriptural proposition quoted as above.

It is now time, that the reader be presented with some memorable instances in which an acknowledgement of the article of Christ's Sonship was required and made. The first remarkable account that we shall produce, is that of the Baptism of the Ethiopian Eunuch by Philip. This man was reading in in his chariot concerning Christ, at the time Philip entered into conversation with him. The passage which he read, was a prophecy of Isaiah, specially regarding Jesus of Nazareth; but such was the ignorance of the Eunuch, that he enquired of Philip, "of whom speaketh the Prophet this, of himself or of some other man?" Philip answers, by beginning at that scripture and preaching unto him Jesus. Doubtless the discourse exhibited evidence of the only article necessary for an admission into fellowship with the Apostles, which directly followed: For coming to water, the Eunuch enquires, what doth hinder me to be baptized? The reply is, if thou believest with all thy heart thou mayest. He professed his faith in these words, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. His baptism by Philip immediately followed. See the whole account, Acts viii, 27—39.

After reading this account, it is not easy to suppress an observation of this nature; that had a union with the apostolic Church, either pre-supposed or required an acknowledgment of a belief in any article not then expressed, it is strange that Philip did not inform the eunuch what it was, and request his subscription to it accordingly. No such thing, however, took place.

Another particular instance of the requirement of the Christian professor, we have in Acts xvi. 30—33. We allude to the history of the conversion, and consequent baptism of the jailor and his family. This man is represented as saying to Paul and Silas, "What must I do to be saved?" They said unto him, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." There is no necessity for many observations upon this historical fact. It may be answered by way of objection to the point we endeavour to establish, that to understand the expression quoted, in the sense for which we contend, makes the faith of the christian, merely historical, and of course inactive and inefficient. We reply; that this article of faith, proposed to the jailor, cannot be understood in opposition to other similar texts; and to corroborate the testimony



before adduced, we cite John xx. 31. "But these things are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the son of God; and believing ye might have life through his name."—The connexion of the two passages, we have cited, justifies this inference, that a belief that Jesus is the Christ, the son of God, is so far from being an inactive faith, that through it we have the communication of spiritual life.

In addition to the two particular instances we have produced, might be cited innumerable assertions of Christ and his apostles to the same purpose, though of a more general nature. Some of these, which seemed to form subjects on which our Saviour delighted to dwell, are calculated to prove not only his Sonship, but the nature of that filial relation in which he stood to God. This point will be distinctly considered under another branch of this subject. At present we shall only notice how essential an article it must have been in the view of him "who spake as never man spake," that his followers should be well grounded in the faith of his relation to his father. This is directly evinced by such declarations as these: John viii. 42, I proceeded and came forth from God. John viii. 24. If ye believe not that I am he, (the Christ) ye shall die in your sins. The same truth, in its general application is made a subject of many observations by the apostle John. See 1. John, iv. 2. 3. Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh, is not of God. Again, chapter v. verse 1. Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God. See also Romans x. 9—9. But the righteousness which is of faith, speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above;) or who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring Christ up again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is the word of faith which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. From this declaration of the Apostle, the following inferences seem deducible.

1. That the requirements of the righteousness of faith are plain, simple and few in number. They are only two when particularised; and these having respect to the person and office of Christ.

2. That the confession required was the word of faith which the apostles preached, and of course, with great propriety made



the whole sum and substance of the article, which the Christian was required to subscribe.

—3. That this article embraced two particulars:—1, Confession with the mouth, that Jesus was the Christ. 2, Which confession was to proceed from a belief in the heart that God had raised him from the dead.

Were any additional testimony thought necessary, to support or elucidate this important theory; and were it required to find a proof, competent to demonstrate that an acknowledgment of the Sonship and Messiahship of Christ was all that was requisite to become the basis of the Christian church; in this case we should cite an account recorded in Matthew xvi, 13—18. Christ is there represented as asking his disciples, this question, “Whom do men say that I the son of man am? And they said some say that thou art John the Baptist; some Elias; and others Jeremias, or one of the Prophets. He saith unto them, but whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Here we have Peter’s plain confession of the truth as a Christian, his answer to the query that his master had proposed. Next follows Christ’s approbation of Peter’s answer: “And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou Simon Barjona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my father which is in heaven. I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock will I build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”

This paragraph among other deductions affords the following—1, That our Saviour seemed desirous that his disciples might express their opinion of his character, their faith in his person, and therefore having heard the opinions of others, he gave the question this form, “Whom say ye that I am?” 2, That Peter’s confession embraced the truth, in such a manner, that Jesus gave it a distinguishing mark of his approbation, by declaring that it was not a revelation of flesh and blood.—3, That Peter’s confession was of such a nature, that it was to be employed as the foundation of the Christian Church. “On this rock, will I build my church.”

Presuming that sufficient evidence has been adduced to strengthen and support the proposition assumed; at least, that the passages cited may have a tendency to awaken a spirit of enquiry, and to induce our readers to search the scriptures for further light; we shall take leave of this article, and next consider as was proposed.

II. The evidence on which this profession of faith will rest.



It is not only true that all faith which is genuine, rests upon rational evidence, proportionate to the point believed ; but all profession must be made and be founded upon the same basis. This is a fact established by the whole voice of reason and revelation. It is supported too, by a consideration of the circumstance in which mankind generally, but particularly the members of the Christian church, may be placed. The latter may and often will be "asked a reason of the hope that is in them." This it is their duty to give, with meekness and fear. But how shall they frame such an answer ? It is evident, they cannot satisfy the querist, but by offering a substantial reason for their hope.

The term reason, therefore, has respect to the testimony or evidence, on which the Christian's hope is founded ; and this evidence it is now our duty to consider in its various particulars.

In this case a text presents itself, which for distinction sake, may be called a key text, and of which we shall have occasion to make a considerable use in our progress through this article. John xx, 31—"But these things are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God ; and that believing, ye might have life through his name."

To what does the Evangelist refer, as being written ? We answer ; the signs which Jesus did. What was the high object of his signs and miracles, which he wrought, and of the succeeding publication of them to the world ? We reply ; that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.—Was there any other object ? There was. The object we first noticed, though really necessary, was still, nothing more than subordinate or subservient to another ; that believing we might have life through his name. This analysis of the above passage gives us a view of the evidence, on which the Christian profession rests ; while it discovers the great end of our faith in the Son of God.

Our discoveries in these points, are greatly assisted by several passages of Scripture, explanatory of the method in which God deals with us, as rational beings ; and likewise exhibiting the ways in which the foregoing truth obtains our belief. We are taught that Jesus Christ is the "brightness of his father's glory and the express image of his person." This text alone will support the idea, that Jesus as an angel of peace, and the Messenger of the covenant possesses all the divine qualities that dwell in God.

The necessity and propriety of this exhibition and the man-



ner in which it is made, will appear, from a few considerations. 1, Mankind had formed very incorrect and false notions of God. It was to eradicate these and produce different views of the universal father, and thereby save mankind from darkness, sin and death, that the Son of God was manifested. 2, The Gospel supposes an assimilation or conformity of the creature to the Creator, in which conformity, his happiness now consists, in proportion as the work is effected upon him ; but there can be no assimilation or conformity, without a model or image ; the qualities and features of which are to be imparted to the thing that needs such conformity. These statements shew us the moral fitness of an exhibition of the divine nature and the absolute necessity that such an exhibition should be made by the Son of God.

There are two methods which exist in the very nature of things, in which we are made capable of reasoning, and arriving at truths. We may reason from cause to effect, or from effect to cause ; but it is just to remark that although one or both of these modes may sometimes be adopted ; yet some subjects require one preference to another. This observation applies to the case we are considering, in the following manner :— Christ as the Son and image of God is represented under the figure of a stream from a fountain, and a branch from a root. — See Psalm xlv, 4, compared with John viii, 42. See also Psalm lxxx, 15, Isaiah iv, 2, xi, 1, Jeremiah xxiii, 5, Zechariah iii, 8, and various other texts. In these instances God seems to be pleading his own cause, by manifesting to man his own nature. This he does by directing the mind to employ its active powers by looking from the stream to the source, from the branch to the root, from the effect to the cause ; and this method applied to such a subject, under its particular circumstances, has the preeminency.

We are further assisted in a collection of the evidence of Christ's Sonship, by a consideration of those moral attributes of God, which of all others are particularly distinguished in the pages of revelation. The union of these in Jesus, places the truth of his filial relation to God upon the surest base.— We have reference to the wisdom, power and love which forever characterise the works of the Supreme Being. Wisdom is a necessary quality in all arrangements, in every thing that supposes or contemplates a happy result. It looks from cause to effect, and scans with minute exactness the relations and connexions of things. It discovers all obstacles, either very obvious or more latent, and provides against every opposing



cause. In these respects, Christ was styled by the apostle, with vast propriety, "the wisdom of God." But as wisdom without power accomplishes nothing, this quality will demand an accurate definition. It is that by which a system projected in wisdom is carried into operation. It is that by which every cause is made to produce its own effect, without the least danger of any frustration. In these instances, Christ is the "power of God," and must, as in his resurrection, be acknowledged "the Son of God with power." See I Corinthians, i. 24. Philippians, iii. 10. But as wisdom without power would produce no valuable end; so both united, without love, could never subserve any gracious purpose; inasmuch as without this exalted principle, they might be employed to destroy as well as to save. It remains, therefore, to consider the character of Jesus as set forth, and demonstrated to man, by his united labors of love; that believing on him, by the things that are written, "we may have life through his name."

The Christian dispensation proposes as a maxim, on the truth and certainty of which we may rely—"by this shall men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." On this proposition we may with safety build an argument. If the disciple is directed to possess love as a distinguishing mark or badge of his discipleship; then if the disciple is not above his Lord; the Lord and Master must be known and distinguished by the same characteristic. Indeed, the founders of all systems, and the systems themselves, receive, or ought to receive our credit or not, in proportion to the good which they propose and finally produce. This observation may lead us to compare in our minds, the specific merits of different systems and their founders. Almost all have made great professions of regard to the general welfare of mankind, but this is all in which they have in any degree resembled the religion of Jesus. Mahomet, as well as many other succeeding authors of systems, could profess much zeal for the interest and happiness of mankind; but his doctrine and theirs must be propagated by fire and sword, by blood, incarceration, tortures and death. Now if by these marks we know and distinguish the spirit and disposition of such infuriated sectarians; why can we not by a rule equally as safe, believe, receive, acknowledge and appreciate the mild spirit of Jesus, the Son of God and Saviour of the world? Of such exercise of the mind, happily, we have many luminous examples. The woman of Samaria is convinced of this, that Jesus was the Christ, from his telling her all things that ever she did. This woman's report, though



only second hand testimony, produces conviction upon the minds of many Samaritans. But when Jesus had taken up his abode with those Samaritans, who besought him to tarry with them; then many more believed, because of his own word; and said unto the woman, now we believe, not because of thy saying; for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world. John iv. 39—42. What was it, we enquire, of which these Samaritans were convinced? We answer, that Jesus was the Christ, and consequently the Son of God. By the force of what evidence were they convinced? By the energy of his word, which they heard, by which they knew that he was indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.

Having noticed these memorable instances of the convincing efficacy of the Redeemer's word, we may turn to consider his mighty works, in the general and particular views in which they are presented; at least as far as circumstances will admit. Generally, we enquire, would these prove sufficiently strong to show that Jesus was the Son of God? Not unless they possessed these marks. They must be the works which no other man did; and they must be works of love, labors of kindness; and performed upon an ample scale; and their benevolent effect must be extensive. You ask, why they must possess this last criterion. We answer, that the theory and practice of his religion might be united. He directed his followers to love their enemies; to pray for those that despitefully used and persecuted them. As without this spirit they could not be his disciples; so neither without the same disposition would Jesus have been what he was, the Christ, the Son of God, which God is love.—All religions but his have been and are contracted and partial. They are very accommodatiug systems. They charmingly quadrate with men's mean, selfish, and malevolent spirits. But they possess no better qualities, no higher marks of their celestial origin, than the systems and dispositions of the Scribes and Pharisees; the publicans and sinners of old. "If ye love them that love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans the same?" The fiercest banditti, who live by unjustifiable depredation upon the rights of others, will exercise benevolence to one another. But christianity must possess more enlarged qualities. Yes, Jesus, thou son of thy father's love; we know that thou art the Christ, for thy works are such as no other man did, not only in kind but in degree.—The bungling and clumsy imitations of spiritual Egyptian magicians have all failed. The rod of the prophet of Israel hath



swallowed up their rods. A minute detail of all the "mighty works" which Jesus wrought, and which "were written, that we might believe that he is the Christ, the Son of God," cannot be expected in so brief a description. We have glanced at the general principles, to which the human mind has reference in the establishment and support of a belief in evangelical truth.

We may now attend to a summary of the works of the Son of God, as exhibited by himself on a particular occasion.—John, who was then in prison, had heard of the works of Christ. To ascertain who he was, which at present it seems he did not know ; he sent two of his disciples, saying, art thou he that should come, or look we for another ? Jesus answered and said unto them, go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see : The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the Gospel preached to them. Matthew xi, 2—5. This, as has been said, contains a summary of our Redeemer's labors of love ; and the account was intended as an answer to John's question, and as evidence to prove the character of him who gave it. No answer could have been so proper, nor subserved so well the interest of the cause in question. The five first items in the account, respect the care and attention of Christ to the temporal and bodily wants of mankind. By this is proved, that "we have not an high-priest who cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities." The sixth and last article has relation to our spiritual state, and demonstrates the Saviour's character in a most clear and conspicuous view. "The poor have the gospel preached to them." That gospel which is glad tidings of exceeding great joy, which brings life and immortality to light, is freely preached to the poor ; its richest treasures are unfolded to the "miserable, the blind and naked." Of him who doth this, we may truly say, "No man can do these things except God be with him. Truly this was a righteous man. Truly this was the Son of God."

As every tree is known by its fruit, we have, by this rule, which we think is not here missapplied, learnt that the character and spirit of Jesus is best known by his works. We have seen that these labors respected the general good and happiness of man ; that neither his wisdom nor power were ever exercised to render the world miserable. We have the pleasure to believe that our faith in Jesus, rests upon a sure basis ; and that the works which he performed, testify of him that "he was the Christ the Son of God."

We shall conclude these observations, with reference to one or two instances, selected from many, in which a testimony was given to the character of our Lord, being produced by his mighty works. Then was brought unto him, one possessed with a devil, blind and dumb; and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw. And all the people were amazed, and said, is not this the Son of David? Matthew xii, 22, 23. Again, And great multitudes came unto him, having with them those that were lame, blind dumb, maimed, and many others, and cast them down at Jesus' feet; and he healed them: insomuch that the multitude wondered when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see: and they glorified the God of Israel—Matthew xv, 30, 31. The simplicity, plainness and appropriateness of these scriptural accounts, prevents the necessity of any comment; and we need not multiply examples.

We pass to consider in the third place, the necessity of this simplicity and unity, in the profession of the Christian faith.

This point may be successfully argued on several important principles, some of them of a general nature, others more particular.

1. From the very nature of the simple proposition which requires our faith, we are authorised to say, that if it were proper to make addition, Christ, or his Apostles by his direction, would have made it. And for this, a sufficient reason might have been alledged; such an addition made by Christ or his Apostles, would have had a tendency to prevent the introduction of error, through the unskillfulness of others, who might afterwards attempt to do it, without a precedent. But we find no such additions were made nor authorized. The reason of which appears from the general principle here laid down; and will be more fully discovered from other considerations.

2. The unity of the spirit is to be preserved among Christians in the bond of peace. It is worthy our notice, how frequently terms expressive of unity, occur in the Christian dispensation. To the members of the Christian communion, there is one God the Father, one Lord Jesus Christ, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one calling or vocation, one hope of that calling. To the Christian also, as his Lord is one, so is his name one; and as is his name so is his praise. Now unity of faith, or as it is sometimes called "being of one heart and one mind" is the result of unity in the objects of faith.

Where the objects of faith are multiplied, articles of belief and systems of faith are always proportionably accumulated;



still at last, they result in what an Apostle calls "diverse and strange doctrines, doctrines of men, and doctrines of devils." Nor is it to be wondered at; for wherever there are many doctrines, they must be diverse, else they are not doctrines, in the plural, but doctrine, in the singular. But when the truth, as it is in Jesus, is considered in the scriptures, it is remarkable how impressively its unity is expressed. Moses says, my *doctrine* shall drop as the rain. Isaiah asks, whom shall he make to understand *doctrine*? The people were astonished at our Saviour's *doctrine*; the reason of which is rendered; he taught as one having authority and not as the scribes. Christ says, if any man will do his will, he shall know of the *doctrine*. The ancient disciples are said to have continued steadfastly in the Apostle's *doctrine* and fellowship. We read of a form of *doctrine* which was delivered. Paul directs Titus, in *doctrine*, to shew uncorruptness. To Timothy, he speaks of a *doctrine* according to Godliness. We are informed of the principles of the *doctrine* of Christ; by which we learn that although the principles were many, yet unity in doctrine was preserved. The foregoing references are but few in number, compared with all wherein the same thing is expressed; but they will serve to confirm and establish the point in question. We may however search for the ill consequences of a neglect of simplicity and unity in faith. What has divided and subdivided the world into so many sects, such a number of religious departments? What cause has erected so many partition walls, daubed with the untempered mortar of spiritual pride? What circumstance has given rise to so much bitterness, wrath, strife, evil surmisings, jealousies, uncharitableness and persecutions? We answer; these effects are to be traced to the cause, we have mentioned, viz. a want of unity in faith and objects of faith. People, who do not, as the Apostle says, hold the head, from whom the whole body by joints and bands receiveth nourishment, can easily multiply articles of faith. These are sometimes so numerous, that it is no wonder, if a man whose retentive powers are not strong, being asked whether he believed in such or such an article, should be obliged to turn to his creed and examine whether it were there, before he answered the question. Besides, if one man, or body of men, have a right to make additions to the requirement of faith and the object of faith too, then others have the same right; and when these supposed privileges are used, one has an equal right with another to threaten, to fulminate, to be uncharitable, to employ fine, imprisonment or death, if he have the power, in case of

nonsubscription to his diverse and strange doctrines. Let not our readers wish to lay all these evils at a foreign door. Let them not think of a tour to Rome, to summon evidence against the supposed anti-christian Babylon. The mother of harlots will save them the trouble. She will come to them. She has traversed all Christendom already, upon her scarlet-coloured breast, inscribed with names of blasphemy, and in her destroying progress, has carried proof positive, that want of unity and simplicity in faith, has produced manifold evils. But the servants and followers of the Lamb, who are willing to abide by the direction of their leader, view the operation of these evils, as a kind of evidence which strengthens their resolution, to "keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace."

3. Believing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; all other necessary truth will follow of course. Truth, collectively, is of such a nature, that one part maintains a connexion with another; and one thing results or flows from another. This may be made apparent, by the simplest figures and images in nature. When we believe in the rising of the sun, we necessarily believe, the world will have light. The latter truth flows from the former. When we are convinced that a stream of water flows from such a fountain, we then apprehend that it will be in quality like its source. When we imbibe this water, and our senses testify to its refreshing nature, then we are convinced that we are right in our judgment, that the stream is emitted from such a source, if we had ever heard of the fountain before, and our information was correct. But if not, then a draught from the stream, demonstrates to us, what qualities compose the fountain.

The application of these figures, will be of great use, as it will present two classes of people, who might be benefitted by the modes of communication we have noticed. 1, If there were any, who, in the days Christ was upon earth, had correct views of the true God, from the writings of Moses and the prophets, or from any other possible source, they would receive Jesus as the Christ; knowing that his character corresponded with that of God. These, having previously drank of the fountain, would discover in the stream the same qualities and be convinced of its origin from similarity. 2, There were those, and theirs was the greatest number, who knew not God, at least as respected his love to the world; for men have generally been more willing to confess his power than his goodness; these, by participating the stream, would learn the qualities of the fountain. Indeed, we find, that when the people



who saw the mighty works of Jesus, and had discovered in them, strong evidence of the power of God, generally, were convinced of his being the Messiah. Thus we see one truth flowing from another, as a necessary consequence. We believe that Jesus proceeded and came forth from God; this involves the idea, that he was the son of God. We next discover that he was the Christ (annointed) of God. But as an unction or anointing always implies an office and an object for which the office is conferred, we find that his office is regal, he is a King or Prince. The object of his becoming such, is this, "to give repentance and remission of sins." This act is in essence the salvation of God. In this manner, we grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Like the Samaritans we know that Jesus is the Christ, the Saviour of the world.

4. Another additional reason for this unity and simplicity in faith, is found in the very capacity and situation in which the believer in Christ is represented. This may be well expressed by a similitude. When a child is received into a school there is one simple proposition which it is necessary the pupil should believe; viz. that his preceptor is able to instruct him, in the science which he wishes to study; for if he does not believe this, it is hard to conceive, that he will apply for instruction — And again, it is evident, that if he knows already all that his teacher requires of one whose term of study is finished, there is no need of his admission; and to call him a pupil would be a perversion of language. Again, it would be equally absurd for the teacher to require a profession of the knowledge of all abstruse sciences, as a necessary qualification to the pupil's admission. How would it appear, for the instructor to say to the applicant for admission, "My child, I am ever happy to see youth enquiring after knowledge. It always gives me real pleasure to receive such as members of this literary institution, over which I have the honor to preside. But you are not insensible that certain qualifications are necessary to your reception here. You must believe and be able to demonstrate that the earth revolves upon its axis. You must prove to me your acquaintance with algebra, with astronomy, geography, navigation, and all other sciences." This language would indeed appear strange, when we consider these are the things which the proposed scholar wishes to learn; and if he be acquainted with them already, what need of his entering the school, and what shall he learn if he does?

The reader will readily apply this to what we are considering as a reason for unity and simplicity of faith. The voice

out of the cloud concerning Christ, is, this is my beloved son, hear ye him. This beloved son, whom we are commanded to hear, saith, learn of me. But if it be required, that we know in the first place all that is to be learned of Christ, and that previous to admission into his school, what shall we learn afterwards? But we never find this to be the case. Peter was long a pupil, before he knew the propriety of preaching the Gospel to a Gentile. The disciples in general, sat long at the feet of Jesus, before they understood many of his sayings respecting his sufferings and death. Paul, while called Saul of Tarsus, persecuted Christ in his members; but being a chosen vessel to bear his Redeemer's name among the Gentiles, has but one simple truth stated to him, the acknowledgment and belief of which were necessary to his declaring Christ publicly. The voice of him who arrested him in his mad career, said, I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest. Like a submissive pupil, Saul enquires, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? He is referred to Annanias for some instruction, but however he is told, "I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness, both of the things which thou hast seen, and of those in the which I will afterwards appear unto thee." Compare Acts ix. 5—6. Acts xxvi. 16. From these accounts the following things appear—1st. That Saul was convinced that it was Jesus whom he persecuted. 2d. That this belief, evinced by his enquiry, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? entitled him to the fellowship and instruction of Annanias.—3d. That Saul did not receive, at the time of his conversion, all the knowledge which might be obtained; for if so, the spirit would not have spoken "of the things in which he would afterwards appear to him." 4th. Yet it appears from Acts ix. 20, that Saul was not only accepted as a believer, but as a preacher; for straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God.

With these observations, we are induced to close the present subject of our discussion. We have considered one simple proposition, variously stated in the New Testament, as the only article necessary to be believed, to entitle the believer to the fellowship of the primitive Christian Churches. An exhibition has been made of the evidence on which this proposition rests. The necessity of unity and simplicity has been argued upon several principles. The inferences which we draw, must comport with the nature of the subject. If unity of faith tends to unity of the spirit, in the bond of peace; then, any thing directly opposite must produce all the evils we have mentioned.



And it will appear, that it is only by simplifying the nature, and abridging the number of those articles of faith, which have so long confused and disordered the minds of men, that Christians can walk in love with one another, as Christ hath loved them.



## ANSWER TO THE QUESTION, UPON FORGIVENESS OF SIN.

QUESTION—"As we are taught to believe that our Salvation is connected with and dependant upon forgiveness of sin, and as we are also instructed that God "will render to every man according to his work;" it is required how far such a retribution consists with forgiveness, and how we are said to be forgiven while made subject to punishment?"

As it is evident that this question embraces a subject of great importance, so it is equally evident that the discussion of it ought to be pursued with caution, clearness of investigation, simplicity of argument, and a manifest direction to the support and furtherance of piety and morality. The better to embrace our subject consistently with the foregoing suggestions, the following method is proposed :

I. Define and illustrate the nature of that Salvation which is connected with and dependant on the forgiveness of sins.

II. Enquire into the nature of the forgiveness of sins, and the action of that grace by which the before described Salvation is effected. And

III. Define the nature of that retribution which is implied in the expression, "render to every man according to his work;" and show the consistency of such retribution with the before described forgiveness; and the necessity of this forgiveness and retribution in order to produce our Salvation.

Our first object, then, is to define and illustrate the nature of that Salvation which is connected with and dependent on the forgiveness of sins.

Two important sections present themselves as necessarily embraced in this first part of our labour. 1st. What are the saved, saved from? And 2d. Into what situation are the saved brought by Salvation? In the discussion of these sections it will be necessary to depart from the general opinion of orthodoxy, and wherever this is the case, it is thought advisable to name it in the introduction of a subject, so that the reader may be the better prepared to meet with ideas which do not accord with the opinions of authors in general on divinity. It

is generally understood. that a gospel salvation is a salvation from what is called *vindictive justice*, which is supposed to exist in God, and which requires a never ending unmerciful punishment to be inflicted on all the sinners of mankind. Should the reader object to the term *unmerciful*, as applied to the endless punishment which divine justice is supposed to require, the objection will undoubtedly be dropped, unless it can be made to appear that there is mercy in such punishment. It is conceived that the supposition of this vindictive justice involves a number of difficulties inconsistent with the character of God as exhibited in the scriptures, and of course, derogatory to the Gospel scheme of Salvation, and also to the moral character of a disciple of Christ. God is represented in the scriptures as willing in himself, and purposing, according to his good pleasure, the salvation of sinners. See Eph. i, 9, &c. "Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure, which he hath purposed in himself; that in the dispensation of the fullness of time, he might gather together in one all things in Christ." And in the 11th verse, the Apostle speaks of an inheritance to which the saved were *predestinated*. "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being *predestinated* according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." Now it is evident, beyond all controversy, that if God were possessed of a *vindictive justice*, which required the endless misery of all sinners, it could not consist with that justice that he should purpose, according to his own good pleasure, the salvation so clearly pointed out in the above passage. The difficulty evidently involved, is the representation of the will, pleasure and purpose of God in direct opposition to the requirements of his justice.

Again, God is represented as loving us before we loved him, and while we were dead in trespasses and sins; and that this love was the cause of the Saviour's dying for us. See Eph ii. 4, 5. "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ." Again 1 John. iv. 10. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." If God loved us, while we were *dead* in trespasses and sin, with so great a love as to send his Son to be the propitiation for our sins, it must be evident, to the candid reader, that the supposition of a justice in God which required the endless punishment of man-



kind, in a state of sin, is, in every sense, opposed to that great love with which the above scripture says, God loved us.

Secondly. Of course this erroneous supposition will be found in direct opposition to the declared object of the Saviour, which object is plainly set forth in the following scriptures.— See St. John, iii, 17—“For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world ; but that the world through him might be saved ” I. John, iv. 14. “ And we have seen, and do testify, that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.” If the salvation of the world be the declared object of the Saviour’s mission, the supposition that divine justice requires the endless misery of the world of mankind, is in direct opposition to this declared object. Here, perhaps, it may be said that the dispensation of gospel grace being designed to save the sinner from this deserved punishment which justice requires, the opposition of this supposed just punishment to the dispensation of gospel grace ought not to be urged against the justice of such punishment. Reply—of two opposites, when it can be said that one is just, it follows of course, that the other is unjust. If, therefore, the supposition be correct that divine justice requires the endless unmerciful punishment of sinful man, the opposite dispensation of gospel grace must of necessity be equally as obnoxious to divine justice as the sinner is whom it aims to save from this just punishment.

Thirdly, it was suggested that this supposed justice is in opposition to the moral character of a disciple of Christ, which will evidently appear to be the case, as it must be granted that the moral character of the disciple is similar to that of the master, whose design and grand aim we have seen to be, in direct opposition to this supposed justice. Here the reader is requested to permit his mind to ponder the following question with candor. If there be a vindictive justice in God, which demands the endless unmerciful punishment of mankind, how can it be just for Christ the mediator, to save mankind from such punishment?

The mind which has never travelled out of the common road in respect to this subject, will naturally come, by the course of the above reasoning, to the following crisis. If divine justice do not demand endless punishment, it is very true that the scheme of salvation does not in that particular stand in opposition to justice ; but if divine justice do not require *some* punishment, from which gospel grace is designed to save, there seems to be no salvation at all : and on the other hand, if it be admitted that justice demands any punishment, be it ever so

limited, from which gospel grace is designed to save, it establishes the principle against which the foregoing arguments are directed. The mind having formed this crisis, it seems to be in a suitable situation to consider the suggestion, that gospel grace is not designed to save the sinner from any deserved punishment. The maintenance of this suggestion will appear absolutely necessary, if we duly consider an important fact which forms one grand section of our general query, which is, that God will render to every man according to his work. If it be objected, that unless the sinner be saved from deserved punishment, he cannot be said to be saved by *grace*, the objection is rendered impotent by reversing the subject, which produces the following proposition. If the sinner do not receive a punishment from which divine mercy is disposed to save him, he cannot be said to receive a punishment which is just.

By this time it will undoubtedly appear evident to the reader, that the common opinion of saving sinners from deserved punishment, by grace, is an opinion which sets the divine attributes of justice and mercy at variance, which is doing great injustice to the character of the divine being. In forming and arranging arguments illustrative of subjects founded on the authority of scripture, it is most reasonable that we use the sacred testimony in such a way as not to render one part void in order to establish another. If we are assured by the sacred text that God will render to every man according to his work, there appears no way whereby a salvation from justly deserved punishment can be effected without making this testimony void.

Having shown the impropriety of the common notion of salvation, it may be proper to give a direct answer to the question, "What are the saved saved from?" Which answer will be rendered unexceptionable and perfectly satisfactory, being found in the following scriptures. Mat. i. 21. "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus; for he shall save his people from their sins." Acts iii. 26. "Unto you first, God, having raised up his son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities." Col. i. 13. "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear son." St. John, xii. 46. "I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness."

That this salvation from sin, this turning away from iniquities, and this deliverance from the power of darkness, is a salvation in which justice is engaged, may be seen by the following. Isaiah xlv. 21. "Who hath declared this from ancient



time? Who hath told it from that time? Have not I the Lord? And there is no God else besides me; a just God, and a Saviour: there is none besides me." Zech. ix. 9. "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem. Behold thy king cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation."

A salvation from sin is not only consonant with the very nature of justice, but it is equally consistent with every precept which justice has enjoined on mankind; and it is likewise necessary in order that the sinner may be saved to his own advantage and for his own happiness; whereas a salvation from deserved punishment would be directly opposed to those three important subjects. It could be of no advantage to a sinner to save him from the punishment which divine justice has attached to his sins, if the sinner still continues in sin.

Secondly. The situation into which the saved are brought by salvation, claims our notice. Salvation from sin brings the creature into a state of righteousness, holiness, and active obedience to God and his commandments. That power which delivers from the power of darkness, translates into the kingdom of God's dear Son. Reconciliation to God, love to his lovely attributes, sincere love to fellow-beings, divine light, heavenly wisdom, joy unspeakable, and the peace of God, are some of the blessed characteristics of the happy situation into which salvation from sins, brings the saved. The saved being led by the spirit, bear its fruits, which are love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and temperance, against which there is no law, but the law of God is fulfilled in the soul by those divine virtues. Justification is one important characteristic of the situation of the saved. The law, in all its requirements, being fulfilled in the soul, justification is the consequence. This shows that the salvation is perfectly consistent with justice. There is no divine law which opposes the reconciliation of the unreconciled. The saved therefore, are brought into a state wherein all their moral faculties harmonize with all the revealed attributes of God.

The life of God is the life of the ransomed soul. This is the life which was manifested in Jesus, which is the true God and eternal life.

Our second general enquiry is to ascertain the nature of the forgiveness of sin, and the action of that grace by which the before described salvation is effected.

Forgiveness of sin is an act originating in the nature of God, and harmonizes both justice and mercy in the same action.—

If this can be made to appear, from the testimony of truth, it will happily accord with the arguments on the first general query, and will also serve as a lamp, by which the remaining section will be illuminated. "God is love." Forgiveness is a manifestation of love and one of its inseparable qualities. See Psalm cxxx, 3, 4. "If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared." In this text the following ideas are manifest:

1st. That God does not mark iniquities in the sense expressed in the text.

2d. That if he should mark iniquities in the sense of the text, none could stand. And

3d. That there is forgiveness with God, as an abiding quality of his nature, for which he is to be revered. It would be time lost which should be spent in proving what must be self-evident to every candid enquirer; and surely nothing can be more self-evident than that justice and mercy have their origin in the same eternal fountain of Love, which is God. There can be, therefore, no radical difference in their nature, any more than there can be two or more radically different principles in one indivisible essence.

Justice and mercy are only different names whereby we distinguish between different operations or manifestations of the same divine nature of love; and as they have their origin in love, so they must of necessity be found united in love in their final ultimatum. Justice is that action or manifestation of love, by which divine requirements are enjoined on moral, accountable beings, and by which also proportionate rewards and punishments are assigned and awarded to all moral actions.—Justice, in the foregoing operations, being a modification of divine love, never deviates from the nature of love in the smallest degree, and therefore never violates the designs of its contemporary manifestation of love, which we call mercy; and therefore never becomes unmerciful.

Mercy is that action or manifestation of love, by which that forgiveness which is with God is manifested to the transgressor, in which manifestation we are brought to see,

1st. The divine fitness of all the requirements of justice, and their perfect loveliness, being nicely fitted, planned and directed according to the moral propriety, and the happiness of the creature.

2dly. The goodness of God in awarding tribulation and anguish to every soul of man who doeth evil, as a mean directed



in infinite wisdom to render sin truly hateful to the understanding, and obedience lovely.—And

3dly. The divine will and purpose of God in the moral holiness and everlasting happiness of his creature, in the enjoyment of himself. Here we may say of mercy similar to what we said of justice—that mercy in the foregoing operations being a modification of divine love, never deviates from the nature of love in the smallest degree, and therefore never violates the designs of its contemporary manifestation of divine love which we call justice, and therefore never becomes unjust.

These manifestations of divine love correct the erroneous notions existing in the mind of the sinner, and show God to be a father and a friend, directing his moral government for the good of his creatures, who are dependent on him for all things.

By correcting the ideas of the mind, and by illuminating the understanding, as just described, the soul is brought to love God in the full exercise of every faculty. This love to God is a necessary consequence arising from the manifestation of God's love to the creature, therefore "we love him because he first loved us." The forgiveness of sin as seen in these operations effects the destruction of sin in the soul, for sin dies the moment the soul is filled with love, as love is the fulfilling of the law; and when the law is thus fulfilled it can see no sin; therefore the very nature and action of the spirit of forgiveness is to take away sin, to destroy and make a full end of all iniquity in the soul where alone it is found. Thus we see that the forgiveness of sin is an act which originates in the nature of God, and harmonizes both justice and mercy in the same action.

Divine justice, which too many represent as unmerciful, vindictive and revengeful, is a manifestation of divine love, and requires nothing but love, which requirement is fulfilled in the creature to the full acceptance of justice, by the gracious action of mercy, in which that forgiveness which is with God is displayed to the understanding, which produces this love in the soul. Here we see the creature saved according to our first proposition; not from deserved punishment for crimes committed, but from a sinful disposition, and from the commission of sins, and of course prevented from incurring or deserving further correction.

It may be proper, in this place, to notice some scriptural arguments to show that forgiveness does not imply an act contrary to the requirements of justice. See *Mat. XVIII. 32, 33.* "O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt because thou desirest me: shouldst thou not also have had compas-

sion on thy fellow servant, even as I had pity on thee? Here, he who had been forgiven, did not forgive his fellow servant, therefore he is called *wicked*; but he could not with propriety be called *wicked* for not dispensing with justice. Nor could the example of forgiveness which the Lord gave his servant, be justly binding on him, unless it be granted that justice in the strictest sense was satisfied with such example, and if it were, it could not be satisfied without it. Divine justice, like every other attribute of God, can never be satisfied with any thing but its own requirements. For instance, truth is in its nature in direct opposition to falshood; it requires its own image in all moral beings, and never can be satisfied with falshood. Wisdom is the opposite of folly, and never can be pleased with it. So justice requires *perfect right* to take place in all things, and in all creatures, and it can never be satisfied without obtaining its object. Justice had a claim on this unforgiving servant, nor could he be released from the tormentors till he had paid the utmost farthing that was due. The charge made against him was for not forgiving his fellow servant, as his Lord had set him the example in forgiving him, he therefore was found delinquent in the sum which he did not forgive to his fellow-servant, and until this was paid, which could be paid only by forgiveness, he must be, according to the requirements of retributive justice, under the controul of his tormentors.—The application which our blessed Saviour makes of this subject is every way calculated to make the matter plain on which I am reasoning. See verse 35. “So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.” If justice did not require this forgiveness, surely our heavenly Father would not, in all instances, award a heavy punishment to those who did not forgive.

Though the subject may be thought sufficiently illustrated, it may not be improper to subjoin the testimony of the beloved disciple, which is so very pertinent in this case. See 1. John, i. 9. “If we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Two important ideas are suggested by this passage, which I have endeavored to make appear in the foregoing reasoning.

1st. That justice requires forgiveness, and can never be satisfied without it. And

2d, That forgiveness of sin is not the releasing of the sinner from the punishment due to crimes committed, but has its ac-



tion on, or manifestation to the creature, in cleansing the sinner from all unrighteousness.

The opinion that it is just not to forgive sin, has established the spirit of revenge, which is the opposite of the spirit of forgiveness, in the minds of many, on the principle of this supposed justice. On this principle the kind and merciful Father of our spirits is frequently represented as the most revengeful tyrant, never to be satisfied while the power to revenge remains. Whatever name we give to the opposite of forgiveness, this opposite must of necessity be considered as opposite to justice as it is to mercy, for justice and mercy are equally the offspring of divine love ; therefore, whatever opposes one must of course oppose the other also.

It is not unlikely that an objection will suggest itself in the minds of those who wish to support the opposite opinion of forgiveness, of the following nature. Then the sinner may demand forgiveness on the principle of justice ! And if he have a right to demand it, his receiving it lays him under no obligation of thankfulness. This objection urges our subject still farther into the light, and is answered as follows. Neither forgiveness, nor the justice of forgiveness, either originates from the guilty, or has its abiding with him. The guilty sinner is in opposition to the spirit of divine love, which is the fountain of all the divine attributes ; therefore is under a moral impossibility of demanding even justice to himself ; for if he could, in a moral sense, be even reconciled to have justice executed, he would not, in a moral sense, be a sinner, because he would not be opposed to justice.

Forgiveness, and the justice of forgiveness, originate in, and have their abidance with God ; he alone is able to forgive, and to move his creatures to exercise the same divine virtue.

The gracious reception and bountiful mercy, which the returning prodigal experienced in his father's house, were by no means blessings to which any virtue in him gave him a claim. His own confession shows that in his opinion, which opinion was formed consistently with his own character, he was no more worthy to be either called his father's son, or to be treated as such ; and these are the feelings and opinions which every true penitent must feel and entertain of himself. But the father of the prodigal reasoned from different principles, and deduced the justice of the mercy shown to his son from data within himself, and which lay beyond the reach of the prodigal's comprehension, and to which the elder son, who built his claims on the merit of his own works, was equally

blind. As the elder brother supposed that he had a just claim, by virtue of his obedience, to every thing which he needed, he was in a situation to oppose the doctrine for which his father contended, and the justice of the mercy which he was disposed to show to his penitent offspring.

As was just observed, the feelings and opinion which the prodigal had entertained of himself, are those which every true penitent must feel and entertain of himself. But our heavenly father being possessed of that unbounded love which is stronger than death, which many waters cannot quench, nor floods drown, in justice to his moral perfections, forgives our sins according to the riches of his grace, and by this forgiveness vindicates his character against every unreasonable charge which the alienated soul has brought against it, leaving nothing to prevent the object of his love from loving him supremely with indescribable gratitude.

Should we disallow the divine character, the beauties and excellencies which the foregoing arguments are designed to illustrate, and suppose that God is possessed of the opposite of forgiveness, name it what we please, it is evident beyond all controversy that this opposition to forgiveness is as just in its degree, in the creature, as it is in the creator. But nothing in man can be more contrary to every principle of goodness than the opposite of forgiveness. Hence it is a fair conclusion that the opposite of forgiveness never existed in God. Though the special manifestation of that forgiveness which is ever with God, may be a new act in relation to the creature who receives such manifestation, and the time when such manifestation is made may justly be called the time when the sinner is forgiven, it would fall infinitely short of propriety to suppose that this act of forgiveness is new as it respects him who is the same yesterday, to day and forever.

Our third general proposition remains to be noticed, which is to define the nature of that retribution which is implied in the expression "render unto every man according to his work," and show the consistency of such retribution with the before described forgiveness, and the necessity of such retribution and forgiveness in order to produce our salvation.

In order to define the nature of this retribution, it is necessary, in the first place, to fix on the object which such retribution is designed to affect; and secondly it is necessary to define the ratio of reward or punishment which the work of the accountable creature merits or demerits, in relation to the object to which this retribution is directed.



With regard to the object which is promoted by the blessed reward with which our heavenly father is pleased to honor the work of moral righteousness, which work is performed by the moral and physical powers which are given to man. it is evident from scripture and reason that this object is not to establish the creature in an opinion of his independence, but the reverse. It is designed and wisely calculated to show the creature his infinite obligation to his creator for the gift of those moral and physical powers, by the proper exercise of which he is capable of sublime happiness. It is not to implant nor to cultivate the vain notion that our good works have procured for us the friendship of our creator, but to show us that our creator was always kindly disposed towards us, and that he created us for happiness, pursuant to the good pleasure of his own will. It is not to cherish the too prevalent opinion that the creature's merit insures him a title to eternal salvation, but to show us that all our acceptable virtues and the blessed rewards with which God has pleased to approbate them, are mere consequences resulting from that great salvation wrought by grace. In support of the above, see Eph. ii. 8, 9, 10. "For by grace are ye saved, through faith ; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God : not of works, least any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

With regard to the object which is to be promoted by the punishment with which God is pleased to discountenance transgression, it is not to retaliate any injury done to him, for the supposition that God is injured by the sin of his creature necessarily establishes the idea that he is benefited by our virtue, which makes him in both cases dependent on us. That such an opinion is as contrary to scripture as it is to sound reason, may be seen by the following passages. Job xxxv. 6, 7, 8. "If thou sinnest, what dost thou against him? Or if thy transgressions be multiplied, what dost thou unto him? If thou be righteous, what givest thou him? Or what receivest he of thine hand? Thy wickedness may hurt a man as thou art, and thy righteousness may profit the son of man." Psalm xvi. 2, 3. "O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, thou art my Lord: my goodness extendeth not to thee; but to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight." But even if the absurd notion that God receives injury by our sins, be granted, yet it would be contrary to his revealed word for him to retaliate by injuring us in return. See Mat. v. 44, 48. "But I say unto

you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you ; that ye may be the children of your father which is in heaven ; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye ? Do not even the publicans the same ? And if you salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others ? Do not even the publicans so ? Be ye, therefore, perfect, even as your father which is in heaven is perfect ” Rom. xii. 20, 21. “ Therefore, if thine enemy hunger, feed him ; if he thirst, give him drink : for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.”

After being fully convinced that God never awards punishment to the sinner from a principle of retaliation, it may still serve to illustrate the subject to allow that he does for the sake of seeing what must be the consequence deducible from such premises.

Allowing God to be injured by sin, and that he punishes the sinner according to his sins, with a design to support and gratify a principle of retaliation and revenge, of which he is possessed, the conclusion is, that he will injure the sinner exactly as much as the sinner has injured the Almighty, and no more ! Having carried this particular as far as appears necessary in order to show that the idea of punishment on the principle of retaliation is erroneous, I would close my remarks on the subject by observing, that if such a principle could be supported, the consequence generally supposed to follow must be necessarily given up, unless it be contended that the great, Jehovah must absolutely feel the ill effects of sin to the wasteless ages of his existence, this being the supposed duration of the retaliation !

The object to be promoted by the retribution signified by rewarding every man according to his work, in all cases where the work of the creature requires the rod of chastisement, may be easily understood by the following scriptures. See Prov. iii, 11, 12, “ My son, despise not the chastising of the Lord ; neither be weary of his correction : for whom the Lord loveth he correcteth, even as a father the son in whom he delighteth.” Heb. xii, 10, 11, “ For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure ; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.” Lam. iii, 31, 32, 33, “ For the Lord will not cast off forever ; but though he cause grief, yet will he



have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies.— For he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men.” The manifest object to be promoted by a just retribution for sin, according to the foregoing scriptures, is the *profit* which results to the creature by being made a partaker of *divine holiness*, which clearly shows that this retribution is directed by divine love as is so manifestly and particularly set forth in the above scriptures.

An objection to a general application of the foregoing passages will undoubtedly labour in some very candid minds, as the more COMMON USE of such scripture is to designate the merciful dealings of God with those for whom he entertains a more particular love than he does for sinners in general. To this objection, it is believed, the objector will find a satisfactory answer, in the following arguments and illustrations.

1st. As the objection necessarily supposes that God awards afflictions and tribulations to some with a gracious design to his moral holiness, and that to others he awards afflictions and tribulations without designing any good to the afflicted, the candid objector is required to examine carefully and see what disposition exists in the all-wise creator so different from love, which warrants this supposition. This disposition surely is not entitled to any appellation by which we distinguish the happy harmonious family of divine love, because it is manifestly in direct opposition to the nature and communications of Love.

2d. The general subject now under consideration is founded on that divine testimony, in which it is declared that God will render unto every man according to his deeds, which testimony is used in evidence by the apostle, to prove that there is no respect of persons with God.

If it be argued that God punishes some sinners from a disposition of love, for their spiritual profit, and that he punishes others from an entirely different disposition, it is required how the impartiality for which we conceive our heavenly father is so justly celebrated, is to be maintained.

3dly. If it be argued that the divine being grievously afflicts and forever casts off, and will never have mercy on some of the children of men, does not this argument stand in direct opposition to the unreserved and positive testimony above quoted from the prophet Jeremiah?

4thly. An illustration of this subject is obtained by examining the dealings of God with Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. For his sins, against which the prophet Daniel admonished him, and for the pride of his heart in not acknowledging

his dependence on God, he was deposed of his glory and kingdom, deprived of his reason and understanding, driven from human society, and being possessed of the heart of a beast, he had his portion in the grass of the earth until seven times passed over him. Here is an astonishing example of God's disapprobation of sin, perhaps as much so as any particular circumstance recorded in scripture. However, all this just retribution was directed in conformity to that divine love, which like a band of iron and brass secured him as in the tender grass of the earth, and finally issued in bringing one of the most haughty, self-sufficient, and ungodly of tyrants into the deepest humility, and just sense of his dependence on the God of heaven, and to make the following acknowledgment. See Daniel iv. 37. "Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the king of heaven: all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment; and those that walk in pride he is able to abase." It is evident beyond contradiction, that God chastised the king of Babylon for his profit. It must likewise be granted that he rewarded, or rendered unto him according to his deeds; for the testimony is, that God will render unto every man according to his deeds. The unavoidable conclusion from these demonstrated facts, is, that in rewarding or rendering unto every man according to his work, the profit of the creature is the object to be promoted.

Lastly, in answer to the above objection, it is reasonable to urge the moral depravity on which the objection is founded; for it is evident, as has been proved from the word of God, that to render evil for evil is contrary to the revealed character of our heavenly father, and a sin which he reprove in us. And as it is evident that the objection not only tolerates this iniquity in ourselves and among men, but also charges it on our father who is in heaven, it ought to be rescinded.

We are assured that the correction exercised by our heavenly father is similar to that which a father exercises on his son in whom he delighteth. This is making use of the parental affections, and of the parental faithfulness, which being duly operative in unison, discover in a striking manner the administration of retributive justice as administered by God himself.—The faithful father will render unto his son according to his deeds; but never punishes his son from a disposition of revenge or retaliation, but from motives which the tenderest love and affection inspire, directing this retribution with all possible wisdom and prudence in such a way as to carry conviction to the mind of the chastened, that parental love is the moving



cause of this affection. Here is the nature of forgiveness displayed in the dispensation of justice ; and the sole object is the good of the son, which is to be effected by taking away his sins. This retribution then is necessary in order to carry into effect the merciful designs of that forgiveness which is forever with God. The want of love in a parent not only gives his chastisements an unfavorable appearance, but renders them useless as to answering any laudable purpose. This want of love surely cannot be imputed to our heavenly father, and as it must be acknowledged that there is no lack of wisdom or power in him, so it must be acknowledged that the gracious purposes of all his dispensations will be accomplished in due time.

Lest possibly a difficulty should labor in the mind respecting the ratio of punishment, as the text defines it to be according to our work, it may be expedient to illustrate this particular, in doing which it will fall in our way to show the distinction which it is proper to make between justice and mercy.

Though we have sufficiently proved that the design of chastisement is the profit of the chastised, yet the process by which the sinner is brought to experience this profit, perhaps ought more fully to be considered.

The most immediate object of chastisement is to produce true penitence in the transgressor ; and while the love of the divine being is exercising the rod of affliction for this special purpose, the administration of divine love is distinguished by the term *justice*. When the necessary work of repentance is fully effected, and the penitent feels his utter unworthiness to receive the least favor, judging from his own wicked character, the still abounding goodness of God is now gloriously manifested to the enraptured mind, now all filled with wonder to behold the goodness of him whom he had disobeyed ; this scene of divine favour is distinguished by the term *mercy*. These different terms are therefore not to distinguish different dispositions in God, but different manifestations which the same disposition in our heavenly father makes to his creature.

The ratio of punishment is to be measured in relation to two particular circumstances : the first is the state of moral turpitude into which the sinner has fallen ; and the second is, the situation of penitence into which this proportionate punishment is designed to bring him.

When the prodigal son had suffered enough to convince him of the evil nature of his conduct, and to humble him in his own estimation, it was sufficient. There was no revenge rank-

ling in the heart of the father which remained to be satisfied after the son humbly confessed, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." It was then a suitable time for the open manifestations of love and mercy to be displayed to the infinite honor of the father, and to the unspeakable happiness of the son, now saved, not from deserved punishment, but from his prodigality and sin.

While it is readily acknowledged that the foregoing tract falls greatly short of embracing, so particularly, the various subjects which are necessarily connected with and allied to the general question under consideration, of what might reasonably be expected from arguments better constructed, or a treatise labored more largely, yet a humble hope is entertained that the most important subjects are made sufficiently plain to the understanding of the reader, as to contribute something to the promotion of piety towards God and morality among men.

It is conceived that whenever the divine character is consistently represented to the human mind, and man is taught to see a *father* in his *creator*, he will no longer be disposed to call him a hard master, but feeling his sonship in the father of his spirit, will strive to discharge the duties of piety and unfeigned devotion. And it is further believed that by taking our lessons of morality from the manifestations of the divine character, so wonderfully displayed in the economy of his universal goodness, our morality will naturally become well purified from all the evils of superstition, and will facilitate the desired object of our loving our neighbours as ourselves.



#### ANSWER TO THE QUESTION ON THE APPLICATION OF CHRIST'S SUFFERINGS.

**QUESTION.** As the Scriptures declare that Christ suffered the just for the unjust—and by his stripes we are healed—in what manner is an application made to our salvation, of his sufferings, so as to produce such an effect?

That all mankind are sinners, and that "there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved," but "by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth," who was "crucified," and "whom God raised from the dead,"\* will not be called in question in this discussion; as those facts are not

\*Acts iv. 10, 12.



disputed by any who believe in divine revelation: neither shall we call in question the propriety or necessity of the death and sufferings of Christ; for being not "slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken," we cannot say that Christ ought not "to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory!"\* But the only question now to be considered is, *In what manner is an application made to our salvation, of his sufferings, so as to produce such an effect?* Or in other words, *How does our salvation stand connected with the sufferings of Christ?* Or, *What bearing or relation has his death and sufferings with our salvation, so that it may be with propriety said, that "with his stripes we are healed?"*

The question being thus fully and fairly stated, an answer will now be attempted in a plain, short and concise, though as explicit a manner as our limits will admit.

Perhaps it may not be improper just to premise, that while the writer of this article makes no pretensions to infallibility, it is but just to remark, that all the light he has been able to obtain by any thing that he has read on this subject, has only convinced him that the Christian world, generally speaking, are very much in the dark respecting it. And though he is very far from supposing that he shall be able to give a full and satisfactory answer to the question proposed, yet as what he has thought proper to suggest may lead to further enquiry, he humbly solicits the serious and candid attention of the reader to the following remarks. For a subject of so much importance certainly merits our attention, and even if there have been heretofore no mistake respecting it, an investigation may not be improper, for it will only serve to confirm us more fully in the truth.

It is an idea among Christians that has gained almost universal consent, that "Sin, with respect to its object, is an infinite evil." "Sin, therefore, DESERVES an infinite, that is an everlasting punishment."† This idea has led many people to suppose that Deity is so incensed against his creature man by reason of sin, that "all mankind are under his wrath and curse, and made liable to the pains of hell forever." "God," however, "having out of his mere good pleasure from all eternity elected some to everlasting life," appeared in the second person of the Godhead, "who being the eternal Son of God became man," and so continuing "to be God and man in two distinct natures," he executed the "office of a Priest in his once offering up him-

\*St Luke, xxiv. 25, 26

†Smith's Letters to Belsham, p. 30.

self a sacrifice, to *satisfy divine justice*, and reconcile us to God.\*

From the above statement it will be clearly seen, that in the view of this principle, which has been considered as the fundamental doctrine of Christianity, the chief object of the death and sufferings of Christ was "to satisfy divine justice"; or in other words, to appease omnipotent wrath! or placate the implacable Deity! †

Having united in this general principle, christians have here split, and taking different roads, according to their different views of the character of God, or their different modes of reasoning from the scriptures on this subject, have been at perpetual variance.

Some have contended that the sufferings and death of Christ, or the atonement, which has been considered the same thing, was designed only to answer the requirements of the divine law, and open a door whereby God could be *just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth*, or in other words, be just in the salvation of sinners; whereas, had it not been for the death of Christ, his justice would have sentenced all to endless misery! But yet such ones contend, that the sacrifice was not designed for one any more than another, nor for a part any more than for the whole, for it required an infinite sacrifice "to satisfy divine justice," in order to save but one sinner, and it required no more to save the whole. "He, that is Christ, rendered to the authority of the holy law, those honors which Deity, only in union with human nature, could render." ‡ Those of this sentiment further argue, that, having obtained all that the law required, that is, "divine justice being fully satisfied" by the death of Christ, God will save those, and those only, whom it was his eternal purpose to save; and it is his eternal purpose to save the *elect*—while he does the *non-elect* no *injustice*; for both elect and non-elect *deserve* eternal punishment! §

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\* Westminster Assembly's Shorter Catechism

† It is not suggested, however, that the writers of this statement represent the Deity as being implacable, in so many words, but on the other hand "infinitely placable:" but it is left to the candid reader to judge, if there be some sinners concerning whom the justice of God will never be satisfied, whether he is not implacable; and if justice be satisfied it can require no more.

‡ Smith's Letters, p 33

§ What is said about *penitence* and *impenitence*, makes no difference in this argument, as it is the goodness of God that leads men to repentance; and the sentiment alluded to above, warmly advocates "the doctrine of particular election, and the doctrine of the special influences of the spirit of God in regeneration." Adams' View of Religions—See *Hopkinsians*, p. 134.



Others have supposed, "That Jesus Christ, by his death and suffering, made an atonement for the sins of the elect only, and has absolutely *purchased* grace, holiness, and all spiritual blessings for his people ;" that is, for the elect ; "that he did not die for all, and all for whom he died will certainly be saved."\*

Others have supposed, "That Jesus Christ by his death and sufferings, made an atonement for the sins of all mankind in general, and of every individual in particular ; that, however, none but those who believe in him can be a partaker of their divine benefit. That is, the death of Christ put all men in a capacity of being justified, upon condition of their faith, repentance, and sincere obedience to the laws of the new covenant—that those, however, who are united to Christ by faith, may fall from their faith, and forfeit finally their state of grace."†

Others have supposed, that Christ by his death and sufferings "made complete satisfaction for the sins of the elect—that by God's laying our iniquities upon Christ, he became as completely sinful as we, and we as completely righteous as Christ—that the new covenant is not made properly with us, but with Christ for us ; and this covenant is all of promise, having no conditions for us to perform ; for faith, repentance, and obedience are not conditions on our part, but Christ's ; and he repented, believed and obeyed for us—and to inflict punishment once upon the surety, and again upon the believer, is contrary to the justice of God, as well as derogatory to the satisfaction of Christ."‡

Not materially differing from the last mentioned sect, only in the extent of the satisfaction, are those who have been represented, and perhaps justly, as holding, "That Christ as Mediator, was so united to mankind, that his actions were theirs, his obedience and sufferings theirs ; and consequently, he has as fully restored the whole human race to the divine favor, as if all had obeyed and suffered in their own persons." For "Christ obeyed the law and underwent the penalty," and "his condition and state are ours."§

But notwithstanding the difference in the several systems of faith above mentioned, not only respecting the death and sufferings of Christ, but in many other respects, yet they all seem to have agreed in this one particular, that is, that the death and sufferings of Christ were inflicted as the *penalty*, or *substituted* as the *penalty* of the divine law ; and therefore his death was

\*Ibid—see Calvinists, p 86, 87. †Ibid—see Arminians, p 44, 45, 46.  
‡Ibid—see Antinomians, p 46. §Ibid—see Universalists, p 293

necessary to restore mankind to the *divine favor*, or "to satisfy divine justice"; which presupposes a time when man was not in the favor of God, or when divine justice was dissatisfied!

The objection against this idea lays in the immutability of God. See Mal. iii. 6. "For I am the Lord. I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." If God be unchangeable, the idea that he has become any more propitious, any more merciful, possessing any more love or clemency towards man, in consequence of the death and sufferings of Christ, (or from any other cause) or that mankind, or any part of them, are any more in the favor of God now, or ever will be, than what they eternally have been, ever since they were created in his own image, is wholly unfounded. How would it have been possible for God to have "commended" his love towards us by the death of Christ, if his death were necessary to *produce* or *procure* the love of God to sinners? And if God loved sinners to that degree that he did not withhold his own Son, "but delivered him up for us all,"\* it may be asked with propriety, how much better will God love those *sinners* after they shall have become *saints*? And if God have no love to sinners until after they are regenerated and born again, and if regeneration be produced by the "special influences of the Spirit of God, and if there be some that never will be thus regenerated, how was the death of Christ a "commendation" of the love of God to them? "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins."† If we cannot conceive of any greater love than that which was manifested in the gift of the Son of God, then certainly his death was not necessary to "purchase grace, holiness, and all spiritual blessings for his people," or in other words, to "restore" man to the "divine favor," because man was already in the *grace* or *favor* of God, (which is the same thing) and the gift of God in his son Jesus Christ, is in evidence of favor. And as we have no scripture evidence that *divine justice* was ever *dissatisfied*, nor can we conceive how justice could be satisfied by the *sufferings* of *innocence*, as a *penalty* which was due only to the *guilty*, and as the holy scriptures do not impute sin to Christ, or any where consider him in the character of a sinner, so we cannot see how the sufferings of Christ could "satisfy divine justice."

But perhaps the reader begins to grow impatient for a positive answer to the question. Then observe, The gift of God

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\*Rom. viii. 32    †1 John, iv, 10



in Christ Jesus, and the persevering works of his ministry, even to the laying down of his life, were necessary to COMMEND THE LOVE OF GOD TO SINNERS; and the sufferings and death of Christ were *consequent* upon his being sent "in the likeness of sinful flesh."\* and his coming into a sinful world. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends:†" "But God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet *sinner*s, Christ died for us." "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the *ungodly*."‡

Having given this answer, it will now be incumbent on us to shew how it may be said that Christ suffered the just *for* the unjust, or died *for* us, the *ungodly*, unless he suffered a *penalty* justly due to us *for* our transgressions. And, to be sure, if there be no way in which one person may be said to suffer for another, unless he suffer in the character of a criminal, or as a surety, or in some sense or other suffer a punishment which is justly due to the person for whom he suffers, we may meet with some difficulty in explaining this subject; but if it may be said of a man with propriety, that he suffers *for* another, or *for* others, although he does not suffer in the character or in the sense above mentioned, then we shall meet with no difficulty in reconciling all the scripture testimony upon this subject with the answer above given; that is, that all the sufferings, and even the death of Christ, in the light of suffering, was consequent upon his coming into a sinful world; and it pleased the Father to send him into the world to *commend*, or *manifest* his love to the human race. "For God so *loved* the world, that he sent his only begotten Son, &c."§

It will require but little attention to discover that one man may with propriety be said to suffer for others, although to gain some glorious object, he voluntarily put himself into the place of suffering. This is always the case when one man freely offers himself, or engages in a service, in the behalf of others, that occasions him painful labors, or brings on himself the envy and reproach of an ungrateful public. As, for an example: Did not the ILLUSTRIOUS WASHINGTON, the *political saviour* of his country, voluntarily suffer, and expose himself to every hazard and danger *for* America? And will any body pretend that he suffered as a *criminal*, or that he suffered a *penalty* justly due to others? No! Although he was "num-

\*Rom. viii, 3    †St John, xv. 13    ‡Rom. v. 8, 6    §St John, iii, 16

bered with the transgressors," or with the rebellions, by those who were inimical to the *independence*, or *political salvation*, which he atchieved, yet his name will ever be dear to every true American. Yes, and it may be said, in a certain sense, "he suffered the just for the unjust;" for he suffered as much for those of his countrymen who at heart were inimical to him, and secretly strove to thwart all his plans, being citizens of the United States, as he did for those who were workers together with him in the glorious cause; and the Independence of the United States was finally gained as much for those who were inimical to American liberty, being citizens, as it was for himself. All this suffering was for us, the sons of freedom and liberty, for his country, and in many respects for his *enemies*! And if there had been a *traitor*, like *Arnold*, or if there had been a *Judas* in his own family, it is possible he might have been massacred or suffered an ignominious death, as the leader of rebellion! But even had this also been the case, it might have been truly said that he suffered and died for us; or if he had been slain in the field of battle, his name would have been enrolled with WARREN, MONTGOMERY, and other American Heroes who bled for us. All this, so far as it goes, is directly in point.

Once more.—The following similitude coming nearer to the case under consideration, will throw further light upon the subject.

A father has a numerous family of children, all of whom, except their elder brother, have revolted from him, and have eaten of forbidden and poisonous fruit, which has so deranged the state of their minds that they have lost the true knowledge of their father, have formed very erroneous ideas of his character, have become alienated from his happy life through ignorance, not knowing their father's love and affection towards them, and are seeking happiness in the indulgence of their carnal appetites and passions. The father remains the same, and possesses every parental tie and feeling towards his children, notwithstanding their false notions respecting their father's character. He foresaw all the consequences of their disobedience, even before they revolted from him, and as they were not irreparable, he, for wise purposes, suffered them to revolt; knowing that he had a sure antidote within himself for this poisonous food, and by delivering them from their lapsed state, he should be able to make such displays of his love and goodness towards his children as would ever after establish them in a just and permanent faith respecting his character,



so that they never would again revolt from his precepts and government. All this he makes known to his only begotten son, (who had not gone astray) and after explaining to him the dangers and the hardships of the undertaking, constituted him his sole agent to communicate the *bread of life* to his lapsed brethren; the *bread of life* being the only antidote to the *knowledge of good and evil*, the poisonous fruit of which, through disobedience, they had eaten. The *first-born* voluntarily undertakes the arduous work of doing his father's will. He went, and after passing through many sorrows, enduring many scenes of suffering, which were the fruits of depraved minds, he came off victorious, and brought home his wandering brethren, as trophies of his victory, to his father's house.

In all this it is very easy to discover the nature of the sufferings of the first-born, or what would be a proper application to be made of them in this case. Did he receive stripes? they were in consequence of the ignorance, prejudices, malice and envy of his guilty brethren. And although they were healed *directly* by the *bread of life*, yet they were healed, *indirectly*, by, or through those stripes.

Is not the American Independence often spoken of as costing much *blood*?—as being achieved by the *blood* of our fathers and brethren; meaning the blood of the slain and wounded in the field of battle? But who ever supposed that the blood of our bravest men, when spilt, had any more efficacy than water spilt on the ground? None! Nor did even the unparalleled sufferings of the American army, although they were almost beyond description, have any more effect, in an abstract point of view, towards gaining our independence; for every one knows that every officer and soldier that fell, instead of strengthening, weakened the American forces; and so with the other sufferings. Yet those sufferings were immediately connected with that power, which, under God, performed the glorious deed.

So in the other similitude: It was the *bread of life*, which was communicated through the agency of the first-born, and not his sufferings, that effected the deliverance of his brethren. The bread of life restored them from all the evil effects of the poisonous fruit. His sufferings, abstractedly considered, did them no good; neither ought we to view them as a *penalty* inflicted by the father in consequence of the disobedience of his other children; but his sufferings all come from a different source; that is, from the envy and ingratitude of his guilty

brethren. Yet his sufferings were immediately connected with, and held a conspicuous place in the arduous work.

By recurring to the scriptures, it will be clearly seen that the above similitudes are directly to the point in question.

Christ is the "first born of every creature," the "head of every man," the "only begotten of the father," who went not astray. He came to do the will of HIM that sent him, to *seek* and to *save* that which was lost. He is the "bread of God" which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life to the world. But the *bread* which he gives he declares to be his *flesh*, and his "*blood* is drink indeed." Yet Christ himself adds, "It is the spirit that quickeneth : the *flesh* profiteth nothing : the *words* that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life."\* Hence it is evident that it is that divine instruction which proceeded from the lips of Jesus, and not his death, which alone is able to quicken into life a soul that is dead in trespasses and sins. How is it conceivable that the literal flesh or blood of Jesus should have any more efficacy to put away sin, than the flesh or blood of the sacrifices under the law? And the apostle saith "It is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sin"†

It will be readily granted that Christ, as an offering, was the great antitype, in whom all the types under the law concentrated, and in this sense we may consider his death as the closing and most solemn scene of the legal dispensation ; but still all that pertained to his body, literally, as an offering or sacrifice, is nothing more than what pertains to the *letter* that *killesh* ;"‡ that is, as it respects an expiation made by his death and sufferings, body or blood. We are not insensible that the apostle saith, "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin ;"§ but it is believed that a careful attention to this subject will convince any rational unprejudiced mind, that whenever the blood of Christ is spoken of as cleansing from sin, it is used figuratively : it means the "blood of the everlasting covenant ;"¶ that is, the life and strength of that covenant.

Christ, in a spiritual sense, is the covenant of God to his people ; and as blood, in a natural sense, is the life and strength of the animal, so the blood of Christ, in a spiritual sense, is the life and strength of the covenant of God. See Isaiah xlii. 6, 7. "I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a *covenant* of

\* St. John vi, 33, 51, 55, 63. † Heb. x, 4. ‡ II. Cor. iii, 6.  
§ I. John, i, 7. ¶ Heb. xiii, 20.



the people, for a light of the Gentiles ; to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison-house." This covenant contains every spiritual blessing wherewith the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ hath blessed us "according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love."\* For therein is immortality and eternal life brought to light through the gospel of the Son of God.

It is not our present design to attempt an elucidation of God's holy and gracious covenant, but if our present views of the subject are correct, then it is evident that the death and sufferings of Christ, in themselves considered, have all that relation or connexion with our salvation, according to the magnitude of the object, as the *fatigue* and *sweat* of a man who voluntarily labors in the field to procure bread for his children, have with the *life* and *health* of his children. In the *first* place, the life of his children is the gift of God : *Secondly*, That life is prolonged, and rendered comfortable and happy by the means of the labor in the field : *Thirdly*, Fatigue and sweat are the natural effects of labor. Thus God said to Adam, "In the *sweat* of thy face shalt thou eat bread ;"† meaning that he should be obliged to till the ground to procure that necessary article. So in the other case ; Our *existence* is the gift of God. *Secondly*, That existence is rendered happy by the grace of God given us in him who is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption ;‡ and to bring us to the knowledge of this grace was Christ's errand into the world. *Thirdly*, His sufferings and death were the natural consequences, considering the state that mankind were in, of his coming into the world on such an errand. Hence it may be said that we are healed by his stripes in the same sense that Adam ate bread *in*, or by the sweat of his face.

There is another circumstance respecting the death of Christ which ought not to pass unnoticed ; that is, as it respects the magnitude of his sufferings. This is a subject upon which but very little has appeared in print. It has been generally understood, however, by those who consider the violation of the obligations of the *creature* to love and obey God, infinitely criminal, that the holy and righteous law of God incurred an infinite penalty, and of course demanded an infinite punishment, or required an infinite sacrifice as a substitute, none of

\* Eph. i, 3, 4.    † Gen. iii, 19.    ‡ I. Cor. i, 30.

which could be abated ; hence it has been believed that the sufferings of Christ were equal in magnitude to the infinite, or *endless* misery of all those who will finally be saved by the merits of that all-sufficient sacrifice. It is no more than reasonable to suppose that the advocates of this system have ever discovered some difficulty on this subject ; hence there seems to have been a studied reserve as to expressing it in plain and positive terms. For but very few have ever been willing to state, in so many words, that God did absolutely die ! or even suffer ! and, short of this idea, it has been difficult to see how there could have been an infinite sacrifice, or an infinite suffering in the death of Christ ; for if Deity himself did not suffer, then the suffering was no more than human ; and even if all human nature suffered in him, the suffering being short, was very far from being *infinite*. This point, therefore, has rather been attempted to be supported by implication and allusions, than by any positive proof. We frequently meet with “ Our dying God,” “ Our bleeding God,” “ Maker died,” &c. in hymns composed for public devotion, alluding to the death of Christ, but in connection with such other words, that nothing short of the Deity could be meant. This undoubtedly has been supposed to be necessary in order to keep up the idea of an infinite sacrifice ; as it is very evident that the sufferings of Christ were but very short, as to time. But should we be disposed to admit the possibility of the incomprehensible idea of an *infinite suffering* in a few hours ! it may be asked what is gained by it ? We cannot conceive of a greater suffering than *infinite* ; and if Christ endured such a scene of suffering, has there been any less suffering in the system of God in consequence of the sufferings of Christ ? Is it not most reasonable to suppose that the same being who could look with infinite complacency on the sufferings of Christ, admitting them to be equal to what the *endless misery* of all the saved of the Lord would have been, had it not been for those sufferings, could have looked with equal complacency on the endless misery of all mankind ? What glory will it reflect on the Divine character to say that a part, or even all of mankind, are emancipated from endless misery by an adequate suffering in him “ who knew no sin ?” And if the justice of God could accept of a suffering in any degree less than the endless misery of all those which strict justice requires, even on the ground of a *penalty*, is it necessary to suppose that the sufferings of Christ were any greater than what the sufferings of any other man, in the same circumstances would have



been ? For if justice could accept of a less suffering than infinite, why must it have had a greater suffering than what Christ as a man, apparently suffered ?

These are serious questions, which the reader is requested duly to weigh, and candidly to consider ; and after having paid that attention to the subject which the importance of it merits, it is presumed that every serious reflecting mind must be satisfied that the death and sufferings of Christ, in a literal sense, ought not to be considered expiatory ; neither ought they to be considered as a suffering inflicted by a penal law ; but, (in relation to the Divine economy) as an offering or sacrifice under the first covenant, and thereby closing the legal dispensation ; and so far as they respect Christ as an individual, his sufferings came from a wicked world as the baneful effects of superstitious ignorance. The sacrifice, or death of Christ, as an offering, contained the sum of all the offerings under the Levitical priesthood, which was offered up once in the end of the *world*, or *age*, that is, in the end of the legal dispensation, *judicially* to put away sin, and was a proper induction of our *great high priest* into the gospel dispensation. And as he offered up his *body* on the cross, as a closing sacrifice under the law, so he “gave *himself*” in his public ministry, “a ransom for *all* to be testified in due time.”\* In this offering of *himself*, he is the *life* and *spirit* of the covenant which God made with Abraham ; in which covenant all the families of the earth are blessed with *justification* through *faith*.† He is the true *light* that lighteth every man that cometh into the world ;‡ and having been made perfect as the captain of our salvation, through suffering,§ he will finally, by the influences of his grace and teachings of his spirit, bring all mankind to the knowledge of the truth as it is in the everlasting covenant of God, whom to know is life eternal.

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\* I. Tim. II, 6.      † Gal. III, 8.      ‡ St. John I, 9.      § Heb. II, 10.

**LETTER TO A METHODIST MINISTER.***DEAR BROTHER IN CHRIST,*

As he whom the Son maketh free is free indeed, there remains no occasion for any other bondage than that which is imposed by charity, which is the bond of perfectness. This being our freedom, whatever charity dictates we may not hesitate to do, and wherever charity would lead, we may not hesitate to go. The differences in particular tenets imbibed by those who are called of God, ever ought to be kept in subjection to the power of that love which alone distinguishes the disciples of the divine master : for it is evident, beyond all dispute, that those differences have arisen, not from the **CLEARNESS**, but the **OBSCURITY** of mental vision. Therefore, whoever withholds fellowship from his fellow servant on account of those differences, must be more under the influence of a carnal, than a spiritual mind.

In conformity to the above considerations, I have introduced this epistle with a design to discharge what I feel to be my duty, towards one whom I am willing to own as a brother in the faith once delivered to the saints, and a fellow-laborer in the ministry of reconciliation.

Although the design of this communication is to present to your mind a more scriptural view of a certain passage of scripture, than it appears to me you at present have, I wish not to communicate an idea that I am able to give you any general information in the scriptures, or that you stand in half the need of instruction that your fellow-servant does.

If I should be so happy as to succeed, as I am well persuaded I shall, in my present undertaking, I hope you will consider me in some measure as deserving a return which may be profitable to me, as I hope my labors, by the blessing of God, may be made to you.

In your Sermon last Thursday evening from 2d. Cor. this clause of the 5th verse, "Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith," you had occasion to speak of the same apostle's words to the Heb. xi. 1. "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

This faith you suggested was a realizing belief of the gospel, or a real gospel belief in one who experiences the knowledge of the truth. I do not pretend to use your words verbatim, but the sense, I have no doubt, I am correct in. Now what I wish to bring to your view is, that the word faith in the

passage quoted from Heb. means something very distinct from that exercise of the human mind which takes cognizance of a fact through the medium of evidence, which exercise is our faith, or belief of a real or a supposed fact.

In the first place, permit me to state the several subjects which must exist as prerequisites of a true gospel faith or belief of Christ.

Secondly, I will endeavor to show that the faith spoken of in Heb. is not the result of those prerequisites. And.

Thirdly, I will attempt an illustration of the passage in Heb. by the help of other scriptures.

1st. As prerequisites of a faith or belief in Christ, as in all other things where belief is well founded, the thing to be believed must exist, and that independent of our believing it.

2d. The thing to be believed must lie so far hid from us, as not to be comprehended among those things of which we have a positive knowledge, as we have of those tangible objects with which we are familiar.

3d. Suitable evidences or witnesses of the fact to be believed must have a proper action, as witnesses, on the mind. When these circumstances all exist, a belief in the thing thus witnessed to the mind, is the effect.

Secondly. I am to show that the faith spoken of in Heb. is not the result of those prerequisites. This faith is the SUBSTANCE of things hoped for, the EVIDENCE of things not seen. In the case of our believing, the THING believed is one thing; the EVIDENCE by which we believe is another thing; and our belief, which is a consequence arising from the two former, is another thing. But the faith in our text is both the SUBSTANCE and the EVIDENCE, in and by which we believe and hope for things unseen. And as our belief can never justly be said to be either the thing in which we believe, or the evidence by which we believe, so our belief, let it be ever so real, true or efficacious as to its spiritual virtue, can never be justly said to be the faith of which St. Paul spake in Heb. xi. 1.

Thirdly, I am to attempt an illustration of the passage in Heb. by the help of other scriptures. One of the most plain passages which serves to set our text in its true scriptural light, is in Rom. iii. 3, &c. "For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the FAITH of GOD without effect? God forbid." As the unbelief of man is exactly the reverse of belief, so it as fully renders his belief of no effect, as his belief makes his unbelief of no effect. But the FAITH of GOD is neither strengthened by our belief nor weakened by our un-



belief. And here it is necessary to observe, that God cannot be justly said to BELIEVE any thing, because he possesses no knowledge which comes to him through the medium of evidence ; therefore it is not proper to say that the faith of God is his belief.

By looking at the context of the quotation from Rom. we see that the *oracles* of God were what some did not believe, which ORACLES are the FAITH of God, which cannot be made without effect by the unbelief of those to whom those oracles were given. Those oracles are spoken of by St. Stephen in Acts vii. 38. "This is he that was in the Church in the wilderness, with the Angel which spake to him in the Mount Sinai, and with our fathers ; who received the lively ORACLES to give unto us." Again, by St. Paul to the Heb. v. 12 "For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God ; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat." Again, see 1. Peter, iv. 10, 11. "As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If any man speak, let him speak as the ORACLES of God." Here it may be well to mention that the ORACLES of the first covenant were committed to the Jewish Church in the wilderness, which covenant was but a type of that which St. Paul spake in Heb. viii. 6, 7. "But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a *better covenant*, which was established upon *better promises*. For if that first *covenant* had been *faultless*, then should no place have been sought for the second." You will naturally discover that the *oracles* of God, the *manifold grace* of God, and the *better covenant* of which Jesus is the Mediator, are all the same thing in the passages above quoted, and are in fact the *faith* of God which the unbelief of the creature can never make without effect. This better covenant is the *substance* of the things for which we hope, and it contains all the evidence by which we believe.

Though this subject is of vast importance, and though it admits of a very extensive illustration by the help of the scriptures. yet I may justly suppose it to be made already sufficiently plain to the understanding of one who is studious in the scriptures. I will, however, add some observations explanatory of the word faith. The word in the Greek, (Heb. xi. 1) is *pistis*, and is the substantive from which the adjective *pistos* comes, which is rendered *faithful* in Heb. ii. 19, "Wherefore

in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and *faithful* high priest, in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people." Likewise see 2. Tim. ii. 13. "If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful; he cannot deny himself." Here the word rendered *faithful* is the same as in Heb. ii. 17, and comes from *pistis*, and agrees as above with the word in Heb. xi. 1, which is rendered *faith*. This last quotation is similar to that above quoted from Rom. iii. 3, where the word *faith* comes from *pistin*, corresponding with the other quotations.

You see, dear sir, I have been particular, though concise. I have shown from the text itself, that our *belief* cannot be what is meant by that *faith* which is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen; I have illustrated the text by the help of other scriptures; and I have shown that the word *faith*, as it comes from the Greek of those passages which I have quoted, signifies the covenant and faithfulness of God. This faithfulness is manifested in the covenant of promise, which saith, "In thee and in thy seed shall all nations be blessed." "He is faithful who hath promised."

By having a clear view of this subject, we see that the things contained in the everlasting covenant of God, ordered and in all things sure, are the eternal unseen things, which, though they are the proper subjects of our belief, yet our unbelief cannot make them without effect. For those things are not pursuant to our belief, but our belief is pursuant to those eternal truths and realities of God's love finally to be manifested in our salvation. Our belief of those divine realities, if established in our mind, by virtue of the three which bear witness on earth, the *spirit*, the *water*, and the *blood*, brings heavenly things near to us, and we enjoy thereby an antipast of those things laid up for an innumerable multitude, who will finally be to the praise and glory of him who is our merciful and faithful high-priest.

I am, Dear Brother, yours in sincerity,

HOSEA BALLOU.

Rev. ASA KENT, Ministering to the  
Methodist Society in Portsmouth.

## REMARKS UPON A MISSIONARY'S REPORT.

In a Report of the Trustees of the *Massachusetts Missionary Society*, made at the Annual Meeting in Boston, May 29th, 1810, is found the following quotation from the *Rev. John Sawyer's Journal* of his labours upon the Kennebeck and Penobscot rivers.

"My labours were greatly lightened and made pleasant by the evident displays of distinguishing grace upon the people in Townships No. 3. and No. 4. It pleased God to awaken and hopefully convert some open despisers of his name; despisers of his word, people, and Sabbaths of God. There was the greatest solemnity I ever witnessed in any assemblies. There appeared a general conviction that God was present. Universalists were confounded—opposition was silenced; and a most pleasing stillness and solemn attention were conspicuous."

However unpleasant it may seem to the feelings of sensibility, it is nevertheless conceived to be the duty of those who are set for the defence of the gospel, faithfully to point out those injurious errors which tend to obscure the light of divine truth. The more particularly unpleasant the above task may be on account of the respectability of the learned gentlemen who are to be corrected by it, the greater is the necessity of faithfulness in the performance, and that on account of the influence which this respectability has on the public mind.

As charity forbids us to suppose that either the *Rev. Mr. Sawyer* or the learned Trustees would willingly misrepresent the sentiments of others, we are under the necessity of suggesting that they must be unacquainted with the most essential ideas in Universalism, one of which is, that the all-sufficient grace of God, manifested in Christ, is fully adequate for the conviction and conversion of the chief of sinners.

In the quotation above we find *open despisers of God's name; despisers of his word, people, and sabbaths of God*, made the subjects of *hopeful conversion*, which is perfectly consistent with the above essential idea in Universalism.

As all consistent Universalists believe in both the necessity and certainty of the conversion of such characters as above described, any manifestation of divine grace, effective in such a work, is so far from *confounding* a believer, it is sufficient to *confirm* and *establish* him, even if he were in doubts before.

Could those who stand in opposition to Universalism produce a single case in which divine grace had unsuccessfully exercised its utmost power for the conversion of sinners, it would



necessarily confound one of the most celebrated writers on the system, who ventured to say, "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save Sinners, of whom I am chief."

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### ON THE INFLUENCE OF POPULARITY UPON RELIGIOUS OPINION.

Though reason, like natural light which it resembles, is an active and powerful principle, it has always been acknowledged by all philosophers, that many obstacles exist which for a time impede and obstruct the progress of truth. We have reference here to truth in general, the discovery of which is ever aided and accelerated by reason. The foregoing will readily be acknowledged a fact, at least as far as the observation applies to natural things, and to systems and theories that have a relation to mathematical or philosophical truth. In these cases, history proves that the mere ipse dixit of ignorant monks, priests and cardinals, has gone farther than the lucid demonstrations of the most profound enquirers into nature. But in religious affairs, most men are not prepared so readily to grant the propriety of these remarks. What is the cause? It is, that in divine and spiritual things, reason is commonly supposed to be out of the question; so far at least, that to her decisions no credit is to be attached. When this destructive error becomes popular; when great and respectable men openly avow such a doctrine; when their opinions are considered, as they necessarily must be in such a case, as the standard of orthodoxy, then popularity is enlisted on the side of error, and has a mighty influence upon religious opinion.

When a stupid and ignorant conclave denounced the doctrine of the earth's rotundity and revolution, the doctrine adverted to must of course be unpopular. Reason and demonstration were shut out, and every part of the noble theory which then presented for examination and belief, was made to bend to the clamors and denunciations of dull stupidity and enraged superstition. Thus circumstanced, had some man whose mind was otherwise active and susceptible of correct impressions, been made to hear the new doctrine, and to observe some experiments that demonstrated its truth, and was asked his opinion about it; he would have referred the enquirer to the late decision of the conclave against it, would have said, "trouble

me not with your new-fangled theories ; it is sufficient for me to believe as the church believes ;" perhaps without a moment's reflection upon the delight and satisfaction arising from "searching after knowledge," and "digging for wisdom as for hidden treasures," he would have further said, "if the new system be true, which is very unlikely, I shall derive all the benefit from it that you will who believe it ; the earth will maintain her roundity, and perform the revolution you ascribe to her, whether I believe it or not ; besides, I find such a faith is very unpopular."

The truth as it is in Jesus, has met with the same fate, more or less in every age, and for the same reasons. When Christ appeared upon earth, his doctrine was new, not in its principles, which are eternal, but in its manifestation. The leaders of the people at once knew, that if his doctrine were to gain ground, in the same proportion theirs must lose. What was to be done in such a crisis ? There was but one method to be taken, which was to improve the servile love of a popular system, which the people possessed, to their own exclusive advantage. Christ and his humble followers must be stigmatized. Ecclesiastical edicts must be issued, by virtue of which, if any confessed Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue. The emissaries and officers of such men must be like their employers, and use every exertion to keep alive the spirit of the people. The Pharisees are not remiss in the important business. They ask with much earnestness, "have any of the rulers believed on him ?" And to answer their own and every other question, they conclude, "but this people, who knoweth not the law, are cursed."

The same art which has been so effectually tried upon the members of Christ, to the exclusion of faith and profession, was once, though unsuccessfully, exerted upon the head of every man. The devil, having our Saviour upon an exceeding high mountain showed him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them ; and said unto him, all these things will I give thee if thou wilt fall down and worship me. This account embraces much important matter. A few remarks upon it may be of use to guard us against temptation. Satan could not mean to insinuate that he was an object worthy of worship, nor does he give such an intimation. The drift of his pompous speech seems to be, that he valued but little what is known and believed, if so be he obtains the outward homage. For though it may be urged that the devil chooses to have his subjects totally in possession, both in faith and practice, yet

when he can do no better, he sometimes consents to a compromise ; and what is lost in one way, is more than gained in another. What he loses in the internal act of the mind, it being against him, he gains by an act of hypocrisy, when the mind will servilely follow where popularity leads, and thus oppose indirectly, the truth it believes. His language to Christ, and to all whom he tempts in this way, is, " You may believe what you please ; I shall not quarrel about that ; but why will you leave my worship for that of another, especially when attended with so many difficulties ? Have I not crowds of worshippers ? Whereas, observe my rival, surrounded with a despicable number, small when compared with mine. Then reflect upon the rewards I give, while on the other hand you get nothing but reproach and shame. I give my votaries the kingdoms of this world and their glory ; why, therefore, on such conditions, will you refuse me the outward homage which I require ? "

Nothing can exceed the effect which such insinuations have upon the weak and unwary, while the mind is led captive by Satan, at his will. The only means to extricate such out of the snare, is to impress upon the mind the worth and excellency of truth ; to arouse all the native powers of the soul to action and independency. In doing this, it is not sufficient merely to prove the value of truth with respect to things to come. No, her present worth must be exhibited, and men must be taught to appreciate it. We must know that her price is far above rubies. We must ascertain the satisfaction that arises from every active exertion to obtain the object, in which we always gain sufficient to reward present labor, and increase our hopes and brighten our expectations for the future. Then will the world and its empty parade, its gaudy trappings and ostentatious show, when brought into comparison with divine truth, in the love of it, appear as less than nothing and vanity.— Loosed from former bondage, the mind will soar above every subordinate object, exulting in the language of the poet,

" Heav'n is my home, and I must use my wings ;  
Sublime above the globe my flight aspires :  
I have a soul was made to pity kings,  
And all their little glitt'ring things ;  
I have a soul was made for infinite desires.  
Loos'd from the earth, my heart is upward flown ;  
Farewell, my friends, and all that once was mine :  
Now should you fix my feet on Cæsar's throne,  
Crown me, and call the world my own,  
The gold that binds my brows could ne'er my soul confine."



## SIR RICHARD STEELE'S LETTER TO THE POPE.

We shall occasionally occupy a few pages of this work with an interesting epistle from *Sir Richard Steele to Pope Clement XI*. This letter, which was written almost or quite a century ago, will shew our readers, in what light the writer viewed the popish doctrines and practices; while it will also be found that those absurdities, which in the view of most protestants, have disgraced the professors of the Romish faith, have not been wholly unknown, nor left unpractised in the protestant communion. The writer of this letter is severe, but his discipline is wholesome and salutary: he writes without reserve, but having exposed error, he gives the best advice, which is, to relinquish it. From the manner in which this learned gentleman makes his comparison between Popery and other religions, the reader will make the observation, that if Rome, be the "mother of harlots," an epithet which protestants have long given her, that she has many daughters, who greatly resemble their parent, and that Sir Richard Steele, with a happy facility has pointed out the family resemblance.

## TO HIS HOLINESS CLEMENT XI.

Your Holiness will be surprised at so uncommon a thing as an Address of this nature, from one who is, in your account, and in the language of your Church, a Schismatic, Heretick and Infidel. But as I think it my duty to make this public restitution of the following *Treatise*, which was at first taken from your friends by force of arms; so, I will restore it four-fold, with all possible advantage to *you* and your *Church*.

I find that all the infallibility with which your Holiness is illuminated, doth not disdain the help of human information; and that your accounts of the religious, as well as civil state of this kingdom, are in a particular manner defective: And therefore I have resolved to act the part of a generous adversary, and without reserve to lay before you, out of the fullness of my heart, such things as will give you a juster information of the state we of these nations are in, than any of your predecessors in the Holy See ever enjoyed; and this, without any further ceremony, just in the order in which they shall arise in my own mind.

Your Holiness is not perhaps aware, how near the Churches of us Protestants have at length come to those privileges and perfections which you boast of as peculiar to your own. So

near, that many of the most quicksighted and sagacious persons have not been able to discover any other difference between us, as to the main principle of all doctrine, government, worship and discipline, but this one, *viz.* That you *cannot* err in any thing you determine, and we *never do*: That is, in other words, that you are infallible, and we always in the right. We cannot but esteem the advantage to be exceedingly on our side in this case, because we have all the benefits of *infallibility*, without the absurdity of pretending to it; and without the uneasy task of maintaining a point so shocking to the understanding of mankind. And you must pardon us if we cannot help thinking it to be as great and as glorious a privilege in *us*, to be always in the right, without the pretence to infallibility, as it can be in *you*, to be always in the wrong, with it.

Thus, the Synod of Dort, (for whose unerring decisions public thanks to Almighty God are, every three years, offered up with the greatest solemnity, by the magistrates in that country;) the Council of the Reformed in France; the Assembly of the Kirk of Scotland; and (if I may presume to name it) the Convocation of England, have been all found to have the very same unquestionable authority, which your Church claims solely upon the *infallibility* which resides in it; and the people, to be under the very same strict obligation of obedience to their determinations, which with *you* is the consequence only of an absolute infallibility. The reason therefore, why we do not openly set up an *infallibility*, is because we can do without it. Authority results as well from power as from right; and a majority of votes is as strong a foundation for it as *infallibility* itself. Councils that *may* err, *never do*: And besides, being composed of men whose peculiar business is to be in the right, it is very immodest for any private person to think them not so; because this is to set up a private corrupted understanding, above a public uncorrupted judgment.

Thus it is in the North, as well as the South; abroad, as well as at home. All maintain the exercise of the same authority in themselves; which yet they know not how so much as to speak of, without ridicule, in others.

In England it stands thus. The Synod of Dort is of no weight: it determined many doctrines wrong. The Assembly of Scotland hath nothing of a true authority: and is very much out, in its scheme of doctrines, worship and government. But the Church of England is vested with all authority; and justly challengeth all obedience.

If one crosses a river in the North, there it stands thus.—

The Church of England is not enough reformed ; its doctrines, worship and government have too much of Antichristian Rome in them. But the Kirk of Scotland hath a divine right, from its only-head, *Jesus Christ*, to meet, and to enact what to it shall seem fit, for the good of his Church.

Thus, we left *you* for your enormous, unjustifiable claim to an unerring spirit ; and have found out a way, unknown to your Holiness and your predecessors, of claiming all the rights that belong to infallibility, even whilst we disclaim and abjure the thing itself.

As for us of the Church of England, if we will believe many of its greatest advocates, we have Bishops in a succession as certainly uninterrupted from the Apostles, as your Church could communicate it to us. And upon this bottom, which makes us a true Church, *we* have a right to separate from *you* ; but no persons living have any right to differ, or separate from *us*. And *they* again who differ from us, value themselves upon something or other, in which we are supposed defective ; or upon being free from some superfluities which we enjoy ; and think it hard that any will be still going further, and refine upon their scheme of worship and discipline.

Thus we have indeed left *you* ; but we have fixed ourselves in your seat, and make no scruple to resemble you, in our defences of ourselves, and censures of others, whenever we think it proper.

We have all sufficiently felt the load of the two topicks of *Heresy* and *Schism*. We have been persecuted, hanged, burnt, massacred, (as your Holiness well knows) for *Hereticks* and *Schismatics*. But all this hath not made us sick of these two words. We can still throw them about us, and play them off upon others, as plentifully and as fiercely as they are dispensed to us from your quarter. It often puts me in mind ; (your Holiness must allow me to be a little ludicrous if you admit me to your conversation) it often, I say, puts me in mind of a play which I have seen amongst some merry people : A man strikes his next neighbour with all his force ; and he, instead of returning it to the man who gave it, communicates it with equal zeal and strength to another ; and this to another ; and so it circulates, till it returns perhaps to him who set the sport a-going. Thus your *Holiness* begins the attack. You call *us* hereticks and schismatics ; and burn and destroy us as such : though God knows there is no more right any where to use hereticks or schismatics barbarously, than those who think and speak as their superiors bid them. But so it is. You thunder out



the sentence against *us*. We think it ill manners to give it *you* back again; but we throw it out upon the next brethren that come in our way; and they upon others; and so it goes round, till some perhaps have sense and courage enough, to throw it back upon those who first began the disturbance, by pretending to authority where there can be none.

We have not indeed now the power of burning hereticks, as our forefathers of the reformation had. The civil power hath taken away the *act*, which continued that glorious privilege to them, upon the remonstrance of several persons, that they could not sleep, whilst that act was awake. But then, every thing on this side death, still remains untouched, to us: We can molest, harrass, imprison, and ruin, any man who pretends to be wiser than his betters. And the more unspotted the man's character is, the more necessary we think it to take such crushing methods. Since the toleration hath been authorized in these nations, the legal zeal of men hath fallen the heavier upon hereticks; (for it must always, it seems, be exercised upon some sort of persons, or other;) and amongst these, chiefly upon such as differ from us in points, in which, above all others, a difference of opinion is most allowable: Such as are acknowledged to be very abstruse and unintelligible; and to have been in all ages thought of, and judged of, with the same difference and variety.

Sometimes *we* of the established church can manage a prosecution, (for I must not call it a persecution) ourselves, without calling any other help. But I must do the *dissenting protestants* the justice to say, that they have shewn themselves, upon occasion, very ready to assist us in so pious and christian a work, as bringing hereticks to their right mind: Being themselves but very lately come from experiencing the convincing and enlightening faculty, of a dungeon, or a fine. The difference between these two sorts of persons is this. The one differ from us about ceremonies of worship and government; but they boggle not at all at the doctrine settled for us by our first reformers: It is all with them right and good, just as Christ left it at first; and Calvin found it, above fifteen hundred years afterwards. The others, unhappy men, look upon this, to be straining at a gnat, and swallowing a Camel. However, the former sort having a toleration for their own way, upon subscribing all our doctrines, can the more easily come to persuade themselves, that the christian world is unhinged, if the latter should be tolerated in their opposition to doctrines which have been called *fundamentals*, even by protestants, for so many years.

This hath been experienced particularly in Ireland; by *one* who could not see exactly what they saw, about the nature of Christ before his appearance in this world. For, as with *you*, a man had better blaspheme Almighty God, than not magnify the blessed Virgin; so, with many of us, it is more innocent and less hazardous, to take from the glory of the Father, than of his Son. Nay, to bring down the father to a level with his own son, is a commendable work; and the applauded labour of many learned men of leisure: but to place the son below his own Father, in any degree of real perfection, this is an unpardonable error; so unpardonable, that all hands were united against that unhappy man. And he found at length, that he had much better have violated all God's commandments, than have interpreted some passages of Scripture differently from his brethren. The *nonconformists* accused him; the *conformists* condemned him; the *secular power* was called in; and the cause ended in an imprisonment, and a very great fine. Two methods of conviction, about which the gospel is silent!

In Scotland, let a man depart an inch from the confession of faith, and rule of worship, established by the assembly: and he will quickly find, that, as cold a country as it is, it will be too hot for him to live in. The Reformation boasts itself, *there*, to be Evangelical, without alloy; and is guarded by a very sensible severity of discipline. To suppose therefore, any point of doctrine to be erroneous, or so much as a subject for a new examination, in so unspotted a church, is a token of malignity and infidelity; and the man who doth it must be content to escape out of their hands as well as he can.

In England, it is not all the excellences in the world, united in one man, that can guard him against the fatal consequences of heresy, or differing, in some opinions, from the current notions of our world; especially if those opinions are such as are allowed to be mysterious and inexplicable. We have now an instance of one or two learned, and otherwise good men, who have thought it their duty, (as they themselves say) to step aside out of the common path. And what their fate will be, time must shew. At present, the zeal (as it is called) of their adversaries prevails. The fire is kindled, and how far it will consume, or where it will stop, God only knows. But the case of *one* of them (which will give your Holiness some notion how we stand affected) is very remarkable. For, not to mention his good life, (which is looked upon as a *trifle*, common to almost all modern hereticks;) tho' his religion is mix'd up with a good deal of kalendar and rubrical piety; though he hath his

stated fasts and feasts, which he observes with the greatest devotion ; though he is zealous for building of churches in the apostolical form of a ship, with all accommodations for order and decency ; though he is for the use of *oil*, and the *trine immersion* in baptism, and for *water* mixed with *wine*, in the *other sacrament* ; though he is very warm for believing in Christ towards the *east*, and renouncing the devil towards the *west* ; though he hath laid them a foundation for *independent church-power*, in the decrees of the Apostles themselves ; nay, though he joins with them in beating down human reason, when it would pretend to judge in matters of religion ; and resigns to them all the preferments in the land, from Dover, to Berwick upon Tweed ; yet all will not do : He holds the *son* to be *inferior* to the *father*, and *created* by *him*, though a being of most glorious perfections : and upon this account, he must not enjoy, even the poverty which he hath chose, in quiet. And if this be *his* case, what hath *another* to expect, who hath not these advantages on his side : though he should be found armed with unspotted integrity, and unequalled learning, and judgment.

Your Holiness will judge from hence, how the matter of *heresy* stands amongst us : and how it must stand, unless my Lords the Bishops, who have with an unexampled courage preserved our liberties in civil matters, with equal resolution step in ; and oppose that spirit, which from such beginnings at first among you, proceeded farther and farther, till it broke out into fire and massacre, for God's glory, and the good of his church.

And, as I observed before, that there was no need for your pretending to *infallibility* ; that it is better taken in the world, and as easy, to establish the same authority without it ; so, here it will be obvious to those of your church to observe, that there was no manner of necessity upon them, to discard the Scriptures, as a rule of faith open to all *Christians*, and to set up the *church* in distinction to them ; because they may see plainly now, that the same seats are to be performed, and with more decency, (though not with more consistency, of which few are judges) without carrying things to such an extremity. For, at the same time that we are warmly contending against *your* disputants, for the right of the people to search and consider the Gospel themselves, it is but taking care, in some other of our controversies, to fix it upon them that they must not abuse this right ; that they must not pretend to be wiser than their superiors ; that they must take care to understand



particular texts as the Church understands them ; and as their Guides, who have an *interpretative authority*, explain them.

This we find to be as effectual with many as taking the scriptures out of their hands. And because it is done in this gentleman-like manner, and gives them an opportunity of shewing their humility, it passeth very smoothly off : without their considering once the absurdity it leads to ; that (as Doctors differ, and Councils too) this method layeth a necessity upon two different men, nay upon the same man in different circumstances, to understand the same text in two different, and often in two contradictory senses.

And here again, with submission, I think we greatly surpass you in your conduct. For *we* have the same definite authority which *you* have, without the reproach of *depreciating* the word of God ; the people all the while being fully satisfied that we allow the *Scripture* to be their rule, and to lie open to them all. And we do indeed, in words, preserve all *authority* to the *Scripture* ; but with great *dexterity*, we substitute in fact our own *explanations*, and *doctrines* drawn from those *explanations*, instead of it.

And then, one great privilege we enjoy above you : that every particular pastor amongst us is vested with the *plenary authority* of an *Ambassador* from God ; very much different from the maxims of your Church.

For my own part, I have always been an advocate for all that reverence and regard which can with any justice be claimed by them ; and shall ever pay them all the respect which their character and conduct, compared together, can admit of. But the demands of those who talk loudest among them, seem to increase upon us every day. For, upon enquiry I find, what I was not before acquainted with, that what was spoken to the *Apostles*, was spoken to every one of them ; that it is a crime not to attend to them, even without excepting the case of self-contradiction, mutual contradiction, and (what is of much more importance) of contradiction to all the precepts of peace and love in the gospel : that they are at length of an Angelick order ; nay, that to despise them, (not excepting any cases in which contempt is as natural as hunger or thirst) is, (if I may repeat it) to despise God himself. And all this, because fallible men, in whom the trust is reposed, have admitted them, according to the best of their judgment, to officiate in holy things.

Every one who thinks of himself in this light, needs no in-

*fallibility* or *impeccability*, to make him as great as ever your Holiness pretended to be. His character will do without those or any one other accomplishment.

These last four or five years, our *Pulpits* have in a particular manner *echoed* with the sound of *dignity*, *rule*, *pre-eminence*, and the like. There are indeed, among the best and most learned of our divines, who disclaim all this ; and disdain all respect but what results from the *sincerity* of their labors for the good of mankind. But the *noisy* make most *noise* every where ; and few care to *contradict* them.

This *privilege* I thought worth recording, in the account I am giving you of our *Religious affairs* ; because it is very *considerable* in itself, and seems to be of a *growing* nature. It is a *point*, which when once carried thoroughly and universally, will make every single *Presbyter*, or *Pastor*, an *absolute Pope* to his own congregation.

And this alone is sufficient to convince you, that at present, notwithstanding any intelligence you may have of their good inclinations towards you, they mean not *you*, but *themselves*. They may be surprised indeed, at last, to find it all end to *your advantage* : but I acquit them of the guilt of any such *design* ; and indeed of any other *view*, but that of securing an immoderate *respect* to a particular *set* of themselves. Which I would not say, were it not too plain from hence, that let a *Presbyter*, or a *Bishop*, or even an *Archbishop*, differ from them in any matter of speculation or of State ; they have shewn the world, by their example, that all this pretended *reverence* is to be turned whenever the *signal* is given, into personal contempt and ignominy. So that to say and unsay ; to do and undo ; to declare absolutely, that the *profoundest reverence* is due to the *Clergy*, and at the same time to raise a *storm* of *ill treatment* against any of their own body who displease them ; and all the while to keep their *countenances*, and look as if *all* was consistent ; is one signal *privilege*, which many amongst *us* have to boast of.

It is very true, what your Holiness may have been informed of ; that in many instances, both of *doctrine* and *ceremony*, we have been, of late years, rather drawing nearer to you, than departing farther from you.

It is a common maxim, and propagated very politicly by the *agents* of your Church, with the help of some of the *zealots* of ours ; *Better be a Papist, than a Presbyterian*. This being allowed by many *Churchmen*, and rightly managed amongst the *populace*, exceedingly diminishes the horror and aversion there



used to be in our people against the very name of *Popery*.— And this works by insensible degrees ; till many a man, who at first feels himself a hearty enemy to *Popery*, finding it to be allowed to be better than something else, of which he knows nothing, begins to think with more patience about it ; first, as not near so bad as it used to be represented ; and then as an innocent matter ; and then as a very tolerable *Religion* ; and at length as better than any thing set up against it ; And all by the help of this general principle, rightly managed ; which takes off the edge of his former passion for the *Protestant Religion*, and so by degrees reconciles his thoughts to its contrary.

To the same purpose tends the revival of some matters of *doctrine* and *practice*, of your sort, amongst us. The power vested in *Priests* to *absolve* men from their sins, hath been declared by many, in such sort, as hath in effect made the will of God himself to be determined by their will, or even their humor. It may be summed up in these two points : “ That men can have no hopes of a *pardon* from God, but by *absolution* from the mouth of a *priest* ; and a *Priest* ordained to a nicety, according to a particular notion of *regularity* : And that God *must pardon* those whom a *Priest* pronounces to be *pardoned*.” That is, that *they* are not so much obliged by the Almighty's *will*, as the Almighty is by *their's* ; and that God is never so much honored as when *weak* and *fallible* men are placed in his throne.

Some have changed this absurdity of an *authoritative absolution*, (which they see they cannot so easily defend) into an *authoritative intercession* of the *Priest*, who is now become with us, a *mediator* between God and man ; still securing to *themselves* the same power and privilege, in a less *scandalous* manner. This creates the same *dependence* of the Laity upon the *Priests* ; and shews again how *dextrous* we are in changing *words*, when there is occasion, without changing *things* at all.

But *Your Holiness* will easily guess the meaning of all this, when I let you know that the same persons declare, that *auricular confession*, and a particular *unburthening* the conscience of all its secrets, *must* precede this *great benefit*. And this, you well know, is an engine of unmeasurable influence, that can rule families, overturn states, and govern the world.

Add to this, another point greatly contended for of late, and very much to your advantage in the issue ; that all *baptisms*, unless by *Episcopal priests*, in a *regular* line from you, are declared *invalid*, and of no effect to instate men into God's *Pectum*.



We have indeed openly declared against your doctrine of making the Sacraments depend upon the intention of the Priest: But we are doing a much worse thing, (if the doctrine of some men can prevail) and that is, making them depend upon what neither Priest nor Layman can ever come to any satisfaction about; viz. the Episcopal Ordination of the Priest, in a regular, uninterrupted line of succession from Christ himself. This indeed sweeps whole parishes away at once, which perhaps have had Preachers never ordained; and unpeoples the Christian world without mercy. But it is supposed it must make the poor distressed Laity adore the men who have this privilege, of entitling them to God's favor, or debarring them from it.

Yet with some it may be turned another way; and they may begin to ask, if the Clergy of our Church, which received all through the hands of the Romish, be vested with this glorious prerogative; how much more sure is it in that Church which communicated it to ours? If we are so positive, we had it from them, by whom we were ordained, and could not have it otherwise; how much more must it be in them, who ordained us?

After this, why should I mention, what must be known to you, the zeal of many for the multiplying of ceremoniousness and bowings, in public worship; for the Cathedral pronunciation of prayers; (which is the Protestant *unknown tongue*, to such as are not accustomed to it) our Altars, and the never-lighted candles upon them; the decorations of our Churches, which, you have experienced, never stop where the honest men who first begin them design they should; the consecration of our Church-Yards; and the like: In which you find this benefit; that several who take the impression of these things deep into them, are easily inclined, with a little art and management, to believe that Church must be the best which hath the greatest number of these good things.

We have not indeed many images or pictures left in our Churches, besides Moses and Aaron; whose figures, though they have nothing to do in our places of worship, give me the less concern, because Christians are in no danger of idolizing Jews.

(To be continued.)

## POETIC DEPARTMENT.

*LOVE DIVINE.*

Nature through her works doth praise  
 Him who form'd this wondrous ball ;  
 Loud each part doth anthems raise,  
 To thy name—Great All in All !

Man alone can sleep supine,  
 Midst the marks of love divine.

Morning, clad in blue ey'd beams,  
 Wakes each songster on the spray ;  
 Man, for whom such goodness streams,  
 Man, more negligent than they,  
     On his pillow doth recline,  
     Careless about love divine.

While the Sun his daily round  
 Through empyreal tracts performs ;  
 Man, Nature's priest, akin is found  
 To dust—to insects—and to worms.

Man alone doth praise decline,  
 Favor'd child of love divine !

Mercy in a flowing tide  
 Waits to wash his guilt away ;  
 Jesus is his faithful guide,  
 Calling, "Sinners, I'm the way—  
     The truth—the life—all that are mine  
     Shall taste the joys of love divine.

Hear him, mortals ! hark ! his voice  
 Bids your drowsy souls awake ;  
 Lo—he calls you to rejoice,  
 And of heav'nly bliss partake ;  
     Bids thee make him wholly thine :  
     Surely this is love divine.

Let the world forego its hold,  
 Quit its unsubstantial joys ;  
 Sell not mental peace for gold,  
 Never pant for childish toys.  
     When thy God—thy Saviour's thine,  
     Nothing equals love divine.